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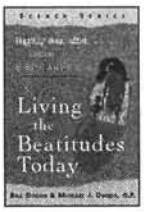

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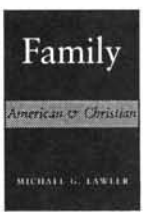

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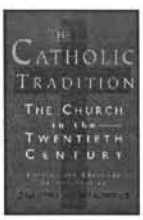

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COMMONWEAL

October 24, 1997 / Volume CXXIV, Number 18

UP FRONT

Correspondence 4

Editorial *Nothing scandalous* 5

COLUMNISTS

The G.O.P. finds the enemy
E.J. Dionne, Jr.
Republicans have found it difficult to govern by bashing government. Now some are whistling a different tune. 7

Lights! Camera! Tears!
Sidney Callahan 8

SHORT TAKES

One month A.D.D.
Bernard Bergonzi
How can we make sense of the enormous outpouring of affection for the late Princess Diana? An Englishman takes stock. 9

Return of the repressed
Marc A. Olshan
As Fidel Castro struggles in the post-Communist world, John Paul II is on his way to Havana. 10

ARTICLES

AN APPETITE FOR GOD
Patrick Jordan
Dorothy Day at 100; an appreciation. 12

POETRY

Miss Besieged Sarajevo
The Forgotten Man
Peter E. Murphy 20

VERDICTS

SCREEN

L.A. Confidential
Richard Alleva
Director Curtis Hanson brings off one memorable moment after another. 18

MEDIA

Sister Wendy's Story of Painting
Frank McConnell 19

BOOKS

Down the Nights and Down the Days
by Edward L. Shaughnessy
Peter Quinn 22

The Art of the Impossible
by Václav Havel
Jean Bethke Elshtain 23

The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology
by Mark Jordan
Dennis O'Brien 25

What Are Freedoms For?
by John H. Garvey
David McCabe 27

THE LAST WORD

Autumn is for beginnings: a homily
Stephen Schloesser 31

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Tip of the iceberg?

Having never read the Unabomber's manifesto, I cannot speculate on his sources ("The FBI Comes Calling," September 26). But I can categorically say that he could not have turned to a more trenchant analysis of the future of technological civilization than that of Professor Victor Ferkiss. Would that the spotlight could now fall on Ferkiss's crowning classic, *Nature, Technology, and Society—Cultural Roots of the Current Environmental Crisis* (New York University Press). Ferkiss's style is lucid and persuasive, but it could hardly be called inflammatory.

Detective work that tries to link similar ideas can have its pitfalls. I remember a long interview on the *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour* with the Ayatollah Khomeini when he was still in exile in Paris. In a strikingly similar way to the Unabomber, he severely criticized the American model of technological development then being pushed by the Shah. So the plot thickens. Maybe we have only touched the tip of the iceberg!

(REV.) LEO HAIGERTY
Logansport, Ind.

Defense needs are real

The September 12 editorial entitled "Indefensible" is itself indefensible. The need for a two-war defense capability did not disappear with the demise of the Soviet Union. If anything, the world is more dangerous now than when the U.S.S.R. was at its strongest. With two superpowers to be concerned with, "tin-horn dictators" were less apt to act.

Moreover, Russia and Ukraine still have missiles aimed at our country. Only thirteen properly placed multitargeted warheads could annihilate this nation. China and India both have nuclear capabilities and larger armies than ours. As long as Libya, Iran, and Iraq retain their anti-American attitudes, we are in constant danger. Many nations still have biological and chemical weapons capable of destroying large populations by mere terrorist attacks.

Our current president seems to be intent on converting our military into police forces. This is wasteful and the efforts, to date, have been largely unsuccessful. We cannot have well-motivated forces as long as troops are overworked and under constant stress while we are at peace.

Larry Korb's ideas for defense, cited in the editorial, are worth considering. But our superpower status is currently almost as great a farce as is Russia's. We are incapable of waging a small police action, much less a full-scale war. We have no means of transporting forces quickly to an area of conflict. The Navy can no longer operate effectively; it has not been this weak since before the Korean War.

While it would be ideal to be in a position to ignore national defense, our safety rests upon an adequate military. People and weapons are required, and they are costly.

PAUL J. REISMAN
Fallbrook, Calif.

The editors reply:

Our editorial did not suggest that an adequate defense doesn't cost, or that all is right with the world. Rather, it raised the question: What is the cost of an adequate defense? Specifically, we asked whether the United States needs to spend $265 billion in 1998 for defense—50 percent of total discretionary budget spending—nearly a decade into the post-cold war era. *Pace* Mr. Reisman, by no stretch of the imagination is the U.S. military the mirror image of the debilitated Russian Army, nor can the twelve-carrier-fleet U.S. Navy be classified as weaker than at any time "since before the Korean War."

Our question was not ideological but practical: What sort of defense do we need and how much should it cost? As an example, since the Russian submarine fleet no longer poses a significant challenge to the U.S. Navy's (*see, Jane's Fighting Ships, 1996–97*), and since the Chinese submarine fleet is even less a threat, why shouldn't the United States cancel plans for the Navy's new attack submarine, saving $14 billion in the next five years, *without compromising defense*? Similarly, at present the Air Force has a fleet of twenty-one B-2 Stealth bombers. Some members of Congress have been lobbying to manufacture nine more of the temperamental planes, at a cost of $27 billion. Are they needed? Again, Senator

(Continued on page 29)

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Nothing scandalous

Imagine: An irreverent young priest who chafes at wearing clerical garb, struggles with his vow of celibacy, occasionally resents his bishop's counsel, questions the standard "proofs" for God's existence, is bored by an overemphasis on sexual sin, and often finds himself at odds with parishioners. Pretty shocking, isn't it?

For many Catholics the most implausible thing about this broad description of the dramatic terrain covered in ABC's new series "Nothing Sacred" is the modifier "young" preceding priest. But for others "Nothing Sacred" has become a veritable Rosetta stone of contemporary anti-Catholicism. William Donohue, the combative president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, has seized upon the show as a rallying point for every Catholic offended by the way the church is depicted in the larger culture. The Catholic League has launched a petition drive and even organized a boycott of the show's sponsors to put "Nothing Sacred" off the air. "A word to the wise," the Catholic League warns potential advertisers, "take this campaign seriously and move your ad money to some other show."

To NBC's enormously popular, and gleefully hedonistic, "Friends" perhaps?

Euthanizing "Nothing Sacred" shouldn't be too difficult. Though widely acclaimed by TV critics (including *Commonweal*'s Frank McConnell and *America*'s James Martin), it is one of network TV's lowest-rated shows. Donohue's misguided criticism may have had some impact, but it is more likely that the program's competitors, including the aforementioned "Friends," make its demise a foregone conclusion. Its fans will mourn the departure of a sophisticated drama that, whatever its shortcomings, actually took religious life and the institutional church seriously. Indeed, the sprightly give-and-take and *esprit de corps* of the show's parish team could at times pass for a recruitment film for the modern priesthood. Contrary to the complaints of its pious critics, "Nothing Sacred" is genuinely sympathetic to religious aspiration.

The Catholic League's campaign of vilification is as small-minded as it is likely to be counterproductive. Offering only the most obtuse readings of the program's conflict-driven dramatic structure, Donohue has characterized "Nothing Sacred" as "exploitative," an "assault on Catholicism," a "patently unfair portrayal of Catholic priests," and "nothing more than a political statement against the Catholic church." Donohue also seems to have found highly offensive a venerable kind of rectory humor that has the show's protagonist, Father Ray, complaining about preparing a homily, or that "everyone else has weekends off," or lamely quipping after Mass, "I'm going upstairs now and put on some nice clean clothes and become a priest."

This is hardly the stuff of Armageddon. (Armageddon is a 2–4 University of Notre Dame football team, and what has the Catholic League been doing about that ongoing scandal!) Nor is it easy for anyone who has spent any time with Catholic priests to see anti-Catholicism in any of this. (The show was created by a pseudonymous Jesuit.) Donohue's polemical excesses greatly lessen the credibility of his legitimate complaints about what he calls the program's "politicized"

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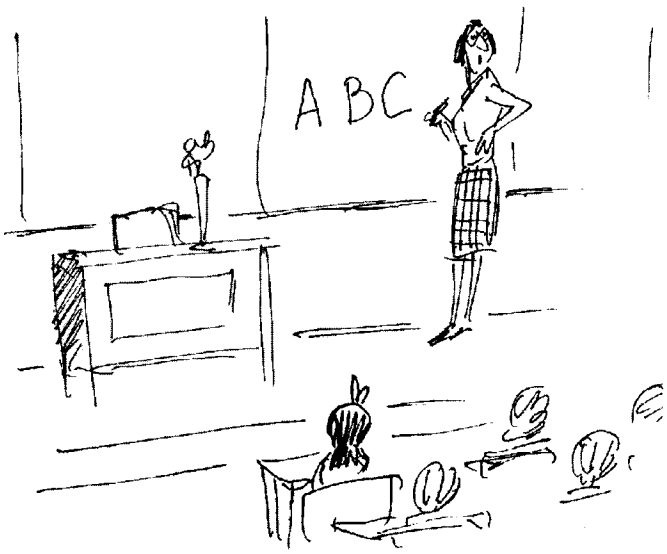

"Any questions so far?"

agenda. For it is true that Father Ray, though a recognizable and believable enough character, also embodies a very self-satisfied liberal idea of the priesthood. When Father Ray is not bucking authority, feeding the homeless, or standing up to "Yuppie-scum," he is miraculously calming violent youth, lovingly administering the sacraments to same, and listening to Billy Holiday when he prays. It's all a little too pat, and sometimes enough to make you want to box the ears of our hero's perfectly coiffed head. But such one-dimensional delineation of character hardly warrants Donohue's scorched-earth response, let alone the sledgehammer of an economic boycott—unless, of course, "Nothing Sacred" is just an incidental casualty in a much broader ideological campaign that condemns first and asks questions later.

It is simply not the case, for example, that "Nothing Sacred" depicts conservative or traditionalist Catholics as "cold-hearted, selfish, and tyrannical," or that the celibate priesthood is denigrated. The very first episode ended with an explicit, if not downright evangelical, celebration of the traditional priesthood. In the third episode, a widower bitter about changes in the church is held up as the most passionate of husbands and believers. He even moves Father Ray to sing in Latin! Yes, Father Ray is a "liberal." But as far as we know, that is not an offense for which one can be excommunicated—not yet, anyway. And, like most popular entertainment, "Nothing Sacred" will almost invariably side with the individual against the institution. But that is a bias endemic to a highly individualistic culture, not necessarily a symptom of anti-Catholicism. On the other hand, the religious life of Father Ray and his colleagues very much revolves around the church's sacramental life, and the communal nature of Catholicism is everywhere apparent.

"Nothing Sacred" is not *Citizen Kane*—or "Masterpiece Theatre," for that matter. Its grasp of the transcendent is shaky; its notion of sin essentially psychological. But these widely shared failings are hardly anything to go to war over. There is something sadly ironic in how the Catholic League and its supporters have reacted to the show's alleged subversion of Catholic values. Donohue insists that "Nothing Sacred" fosters "the most negative stereotype of those who remain loyal to the church." Yet in responding to this putative scandal with an economic boycott and little more than demagogic commentary, the Catholic League itself is perpetuating the most negative stereotypes of Catholics as prigs and censors eager to impose their values on society as a whole.

Flannery O'Connor was very familiar with this self-defeating Catholic attitude toward the arts. She called it a "parochial aesthetic," and warned that it reduced "the supernatural to pious cliché." The age-old Catholic demand for "positive" literature or art, O'Connor complained, is too often a symptom both of weak faith and plain ignorance of how fiction or drama works. "Ignorance," O'Connor concluded, "is excusable when it is borne like a cross, but when it is wielded like an ax, and with moral indignation, then it becomes something else indeed. We reflect the church in everything we do, and those who can see clearly that our judgment is false in matters of art cannot be blamed for suspecting our judgment in matters of religion."

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E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

THE G.O.P. FINDS THE ENEMY

And it's them

For the sake of the Republican party, the recent fight between Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and former Massachusetts Republican Governor Bill Weld ought to be the last gasp of an old argument. If Republicans are serious about running the national government, they need to believe in governing. They haven't proved that yet.

Don't believe me on this. Listen to two Republicans, William Kristol and David Brooks, who offered a manifesto to their party recently in the *Wall Street Journal*. It had nothing to do with the Helms-Weld fight, but much bearing on it.

"The era of big government may be over, but a new era of conservative governance hasn't yet begun," they declared. Why? "Unpleasant though it is to admit, a barrier to the success of today's conservatism is...today's conservatism." Those three dots are theirs, presumably to emphasize their heresy.

"Wishing to be left alone isn't a governing doctrine," they write, contradicting the governing doctrine of many in their party. "Indeed, in recent years some conservatives' sensible contempt for the nanny state has at times spilled over into a foolish, and politically suicidal, contempt for the American state. A conservatism that organizes citizens' resentments rather than informing their hopes will always fall short of fundamental victory." And they ask a question remarkable only in light of current Republican rhetorical habits: "How can Americans love their nation if they hate its government?"

Kristol and Brooks, both editors of the conservative *Weekly Standard*, were not just mouthing off. They have been working for the last year on a new approach for the Republicans grandly called "national-greatness" conservatism. The idea is that government should be used, at home and abroad, to pursue large goals. Theirs is the conservative tradition—currently unfashionable—of Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay, and Teddy Roosevelt. All believed in strong government. (Liberals claim TR, too, proving that history is complicated.) Kristol is not shy about criticizing Republican politicians for factionalism and intellectual paralysis. "They are captives to these conservative sects instead of thinking in a fresh way about the American tradition," he said in an interview.

The Helms-Weld battle revealed why Republicans need the argument that Kristol and Brooks want to start. The standard account of President Bill Clinton's failed nomination of Weld to be ambassador to Mexico is true as far as it goes. Senator Helms represents North Carolina social conservatism and can't stand Weld for his commitment to Massachusetts social liberalism.

Helms had the power. Weld had no base. Democrats were not prepared to fight for Weld. Republicans (with notable exceptions such as Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana) wanted Weld to go away. He did.

"It seems like politicians are always underestimating our intelligence and we are always overestimating theirs."

But for all their differences, Weld and Helms simply represent different brands of antigovernment politics. Helms has always opposed federal spending (except on tobacco), and also opposed federal intervention on behalf of civil rights, abortion rights, and feminism. Weld is just as antispending as Helms. But for him, being antigovernment means keeping government out of issues such as abortion and the medicinal use of marijuana.

In other words, Republicans who claim to be united by an antigovernment creed are deeply divided over what it means to be antigovernment. Kristol and Brooks are suggesting that Republicans give up the pretense that they are consistently antigovernment. Instead, the party should ask what "limited but energetic" government would do. For them, this includes an interventionist foreign policy. They don't mind that this makes them sound like cold-war Democrats in the tradition of the late Senator Henry M. Jackson.

Kristol acknowledges that there is absolutely no mass base for his brand of conservatism—"a minor problem," he says with a chuckle. But New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani fits his mold. Such Republicans as Lamar Alexander, Bill Bennett, Steve Forbes, and Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona have expressed interest in aspects of the Greatness Doctrine.

What's missing are specifics—a problem since Kristol and Brooks have to explain where they differ from Democrats, who also favor "limited but energetic" government. Using government on behalf of "national greatness" could get you right back to the New Deal.

New Dealism doesn't bother Kristol. "Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy and, for that matter, Lyndon Johnson, are big facts in American history," he said in an interview. "Are we willing to say that the country is worse off because of FDR or JFK or LBJ? I'm not willing to say that."

There's a message here: The era of bashing government is ending. □

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

LIGHTS! CAMERA! TEARS!

A little restraint, please

Let's hear it for the stiff upper lip and dignified restraint in public displays of grief. The British royals took an unfair beating when they were criticized for their insufficient mourning of Diana's shocking death.

These complaints, along with the massive outpourings of sorrow for Diana, point to certain shifts in our Western culture. It appears that it is no longer enough to engage in rituals devised to help us poor mortals mourn. Appropriately enough for Diana, there were flower bouquets, mash notes, pop music tributes, and teddy bears to complement more traditional rites; a wave of tossed flowers and clapping accompanied her cortege to her island burial place.

We do continue to say it with flowers and employ the sound of music, as well as bodily gestures and ancient scriptures. Good enough. But now we insist that mourners weep on camera—so that everyone can see how sensitively they are responding and how deeply they care? Bill Clinton's hair-trigger threshold for tears and instantaneous sentimental effusions have become the new standard for public grieving.

Is there no better way? Recently I was impressed by a speech which one of the great early physicians, William Osler (1849–1919), regularly delivered to his Johns Hopkins medical students. He took as his topic a discourse on equanimity, or *aequanimitas* and said to his (all-male) audience, "Cultivate, gentlemen, such a judicious measure of obtuseness as will enable you to meet the exigencies of practice with firmness and courage, without, at the same time, hardening 'the human heart by which we live'" (*see, The Healer's Calling: A Spirituality for Physicians and Other Health-Care Professionals* by Daniel P. Sulmasy, O.F.M., M.D., Paulist Press).

Osler's purpose in recommending composure was not to encourage icy detachment but to point out that true commitment to the well-being of one's patients requires a physician to keep calm when facing adversity and crises. In emergencies, true beneficence means coping courageously, no matter how disturbed you feel. Otherwise you may end up following that humorous but dangerous maxim, "When in danger, when in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout." Since emotions are contagious, displays of panic, fear, and despair can produce routs or riots.

Hearts need not be castigated as hard just because they choose to break behind closed doors in private moments. Does grief exist only if it is seen to exist trumpeting and crying out in the marketplace and media? I'd say that it remains the case that still waters run deep and shallow brooks babble noisily.

Here I am not making a plea for any form of neostoic aloofness from all-entangling human bonds. Nor can we approve the numbing of emotions that affects so many robotic modern types, mostly males, I'm afraid, depersonalized by fixations on technology. A style marked by perpetual pompous *gravitas* is either an affliction or an affectation. Humorlessness should never be equated with competence.

No, I believe that all wholly developed persons must be gifted with the full range of nuanced feelings, from light and blithe to dark and deeply passionate. Think of Christ being moved by joy, pity, anger, affection, sorrow, love, and even the kind of dread that sweats blood. How wrong Augustine was to claim that Christ only "accepted those emotions in his human mind for the sake of his fixed providential design when he so decided." Truly human persons have hearts that do not *decide* when to feel appropriate emotions, any more than they decide to accept the pumping of blood to deliver oxygen.

I also know from psychological research that being able to acknowledge and express the emotions that one has is important for mental and physical health. Having emotionally charged secrets, usually dark secrets, and never disclosing them to anyone can be damaging to a person's functioning. In recent experiments it was found that college students who, for the first time, disclosed in writing those secrets that they had never told anyone before, visited the health-care service less often then a control group. Perhaps the fact that such persons never had a friend they could trust enough to confide in was the source of the problem.

But there is a time and place for everything. I don't watch much TV, but when I accidentally got a glimpse of a certain talk show I could only blush with shame and quickly turn off the set. Oddly enough, you can feel vicarious shame for people who don't know enough to be ashamed of themselves. Orgies of expressive public display must be like sexual promiscuity in drying up the deep wellsprings of private feeling.

"Judicious obtuseness" may also be necessary for a morally committed life. Many women, for instance (*mea culpa*), can be so supersensitive to the slightest emotional emanation of distress or disapproval from others that they can hardly engage in disagreement or conflict. In the name of peace, they shrink

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from necessary confrontations.

Somehow, we have to get ourselves and our culture into a more balanced mode when it comes to feeling and displays of emotion. Too suppressed and stoically chilly and you become an autistic automaton vulnerable to disease. Too loosely tied together and you become banal. Like little bear's porridge, public behavior should be neither too hot nor too cold, but just right; especially when it comes to grief and mourning in the tragic loss of a youthful beauty such as Diana's.

In a poem Gerard Manley Hopkins addressed to a sensitive, young child who is distressed at the loss of beautiful leaves in the fall, he sadly and shrewdly diagnoses the human condition:

Margaret are you grieving
Over goldengrove unleaving?...
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder...
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same...
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for. □

Bernard Bergonzi

ONE MONTH A.D.D.

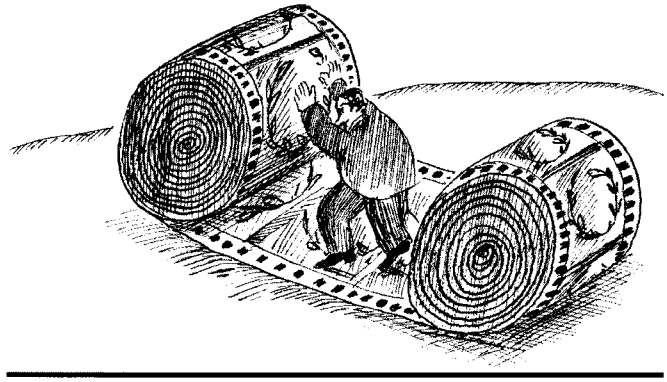
(After Diana's death)

With the passing of the years, I find the temptation I most have to resist is not lust or wealth or power, but cynicism. I had to struggle hard during the extraordinary events in Britain that followed the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. The death itself was, in the deepest sense, a truly shocking thing, the sudden disappearance of one of the most familiar features of the environment (some popular magazines had her face on the cover for almost every issue). It was as if the house across the street had suddenly collapsed, with lives lost. Yet though I was shocked I was not particularly surprised; yes, I thought, this is a strong if predictable ending to a painful, but romantic story; the heroine dies in a car crash in Paris, together with her latest lover. Though I felt sadness at her death, it was of the limited, formal kind that is likely to arise when one hears that a woman in her thirties whom one has never met has died suddenly leaving behind two young sons.

On the face of it, the mass of the people responded very differently, even weeping in the streets, or so the media reported. Thousands of mourners queued for hours to sign books of condolence, people milled round Buckingham Palace and other royal residences, and masses of flowers piled up outside public buildings in London and elsewhere. All this was reported on television and there was a strange symbiosis, or closed loop, between the masses and the media, so that people when interviewed and asked what they were feeling, replied in phrases they had already heard on TV. The BBC and the other networks have been prepared for years for the death of the Queen Mother, who is now well into her nineties, and newscasters have their black ties with them at all times. So when Diana died this well-rehearsed program moved into action; subsequent reactions have been that it was excessive, reminiscent of the public obsequies for the leaders of the former Soviet Union. So, we hear, when the Queen Mother does die she will have a rather simpler send-off.

However involved with media reactions, the extravagant public emotion seems to have been genuine. I didn't really understand it, and insofar as I did, I found it troubling. "Mass hysteria" is a harsh phrase, but it seems appropriate. A few people were able to resist it, expressing their dissent and distance from the dominant mood in occasional newspaper columns and letters from readers, and they were, I suspect, more numerous than the media wanted to admit. The question they (and I) asked was: How can people profess such intensities of feeling for someone they have never met? So many of them felt they knew Diana intimately, though all they knew were images and sound-bites and more or less scandalous stories from the press. Here we are brought up against the workings of the star system, and Diana had not long been dead before she was compared with Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. I thought, too, of Eva Perón, and of the spectacle of her funeral in the movie *Evita*; my resistance to cynicism faltered, and I found the song from the soundtrack, "Oh what a circus, oh what a show" running through my head.

Some of the most effusive journalistic tributes were prompted by guilt, for Diana had been getting a bad press just before she died (the indispensable satirical magazine *Private Eye* has published a revealing range of "before and after" comments); some belittling remarks actually appeared in the Sunday newspapers a few hours after her death; they were already in the press and could not be recalled. Diana's mental stability was questioned and her affair with the Egyptian playboy Dodi Fayed was scathingly discussed; his tycoon father who owns Harrods and the Paris Ritz, is regarded as a malign figure on the fringes of British public life. It was reported that Diana wanted to marry Dodi. If she had, I think the union would have been as unpopular as that of Jackie Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis in the United States. It then, I hope, is sober realism rather than cynicism to point out that her death and instant apotheosis saved her from this fate.



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One of the most curious and distasteful aspects of the aftermath was the linking of Diana and Mother Teresa, who died a few days later; both were seen as saints in their own way. (But then there were calls for the beatification of Eva Perón after her death.) Diana was active in supporting good causes, but so are many less-publicized figures, and I personally find it hard to think of someone who possessed 500 ball-gowns as a saint, though that is not to say that she isn't one; God in his love and wisdom will have decided.

In the fickle movements of public opinion, some people are down and others are up. The Queen and Prince Charles were reckoned to have responded very inadequately. Again, I risk cynicism by saying that the Queen was probably caught up in the confused emotional state of someone whose personal enemy, whom she regards as having damaged everything she believes in, has died a sudden, violent death. The monarchy is much less popular than it once was, and republican sentiments are growing. But I think it will remain, albeit in the simpler style of the Scandinavian or Dutch or Spanish monarchies. Prime Minister Tony Blair, however, came out of the tragedy very well. He is reckoned to have hit just the right note in his responses: The address to the people was heartfelt—the presentation of Diana as a "people's princess" went down well—but it had been discussed with his press secretary first. Blair deflects cynicism; he is a patently sincere man, but he is also very calculating. It is this that makes him such a formidable politician, whose honeymoon with the British people is proving remarkably long-lived. □

Bernard Bergonzi *writes from England.*

Marc A. Olshan

RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

Is Cuba getting religion?

Cuba's current economic crisis, triggered initially by the withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1989, has forced its citizens to devise imaginative strategies for survival. Cubans call it "inventing." They "invent" transportation by jury-rigging a bicycle with enough wooden seats to carry the entire family. They "invent" additional bedrooms in already tiny apartments by building partitions with scrap lumber. Food is "invented" by raising chickens on the balconies of high-rises. Housewives cook with an array of "inventions," including recycled electric heating coils, makeshift kerosene burners, and homemade charcoal. The island's abrupt slide back into the third world has made Cubans expert at improvising solutions to everyday problems. And they are proving no less adept at "inventing" solutions to what many now openly refer to as a spiritual crisis.

For many Cubans, disillusionment has given way to desperation. With the government's state-sponsored ideology unable to provide meat or meaning, Cubans are turning to religion. But, just as the "inventions" for economic survival generally rely on using earlier technologies, so Cubans' "invention" of religion represents a renewal of earlier practices. As a priest in Santiago de Cuba, the island's second largest city, explained it:

> We have lived for thirty-six years in a militantly atheist, Marxist-Leninist country. This situation created a reduction in the public practice of religion because not everyone dared to openly express their faith. But it did not result in a reduction of real religiosity or of the need for somehow expressing that contact with the transcendent. There were people who didn't come to church, who didn't practice their faith. But they were carrying inside their souls the Virgin of Charity [patroness of Cuba], whom they venerated in the privacy of their homes.

His interpretation is not that "the religious spirit of Cubans has grown. Rather there has been an increase in its public manifestation. I notice it in the growing attendance at daily Masses, and in the large number of people who wish to receive religious education."

A realistic assessment of this "return," however, requires recognizing that in the years immediately before the revolution only 24 percent of the population regularly attended Mass. The idea of "return" must be conditioned as well by the Cuban demographic reality: Most of the island's inhabitants were born after the revolution. This means that a majority of Cubans received an antireligious education and were raised in ignorance of Catholicism. Most of those approaching the church now are doing so for the first time.

These points were recently argued by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a Cuban priest who is director of the Archdiocesan Study Center of Havana. In answering the question: "Are the Cuban people Catholic or not?" he responded that despite the fact that only a minority can be considered Catholic, the church in Cuba enjoys a level of esteem "probably higher than at any time in at least the last 150 years," and is seen by many as an institution at once "visible, honorable, steadfast, and independent": "The church today has a social influence that can't be expressed in numbers or definitive statements, and that transcends rates of religious practice...numbers that certainly have grown substantially in recent years."

Some of the reasons for the large numbers of new believers, not only in the Catholic but also in Protestant and Afro-Cuban churches, may not be so noble. For the churches display a relatively high degree of autonomy in a society in which almost all institutions, and most ways of earning a living, are controlled by the government. The churches' contacts with sources of aid from outside the country mean that they are often able to provide what Cubans somewhat delicately refer to as "material possibilities." Church membership may represent a way of "inventing" access to oth-

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erwise unavailable consumer goods.

For Cuba's bored and frustrated youth—limited in their possibilities for socializing, self-expression, and new experiences—the churches provide a social setting where they can enjoy their free time. For others, the churches represent the best means for expediting travel out of the country. Yet no one is suggesting that secular considerations are the primary reason that religion is once again playing a vibrant role in Cuban society.

The government's reaction to the wave of religious enthusiasm, for the most part, has been to get out of the way. In fact, the revolutionary government always portrayed itself as antireactionary rather than antireligious, but the distinction was lost on those who were ridiculed for attending services or prohibited from full participation in society, including joining the Communist party, as long as they were members of a church. In the face of growing religious sentiment, however, the government has deliberately downplayed any potential conflict between the official atheism of the state and the convictions of believers. Castro set the tone by meeting with evangelical Christians in 1990. The following year the prohibition on simultaneous church and Communist party membership was lifted, and the government also legalized meetings in private homes for worship and Bible study, although religious schools are still prohibited and access to the mass media is denied.

Castro's visit to the Vatican last year and Pope John Paul II's scheduled visit to Cuba in January 1998 are further signs of a shift in policy. Whether this more-tolerant stance will temper the growth of religious sentiment or encourage it remains to be seen. Greater religious freedom may make the churches more attractive to those with few other outlets for self-expression or dissent. Thus even in the absence of any explicit political meaning, placards picturing the pope with the words "Messenger of Truth and Hope" are implicitly subversive, at least in a society where up until now there has been only one message and one messenger.

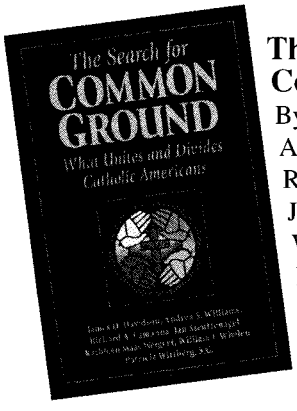
For many Cubans, an inchoate sense of expectation seems to be replacing the resignation of recent years. Vaguely hopeful predictions are now being made about how Cubans will react when they gather in large numbers to see the pope. The specifics are less important than the idea of raw potential implicit in this contact, a potential that contrasts strikingly with the barrenness of the current system.

The Cuban "invention" of religion may be interpreted as a predictable reaction to hard times and hollow ideology, a case of faith as last resort. Perhaps. But it is no less powerful or vital for that. Religion's ultimate shape and influence in Cuba are anything but predictable. The only certainty is that Cubans will respond to spiritual crisis as they have to economic crisis, with a uniquely Cuban flair. □

Marc A. Olshan *is professor of sociology at Alfred University in Alfred, New York. He travels to Cuba frequently.*

Our Sunday Visitor's

The Search for
COMMON GROUND
What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans



The Search for Common Ground
By James D. Davidson, Andrea S. Williams, Richard A. Lamanna, Jan Stenftenagel, Kathleen Maas Weigert, William J. Whalen, Patricia Wittberg, S.C.
0-87973-**925**-8, hardcover, $24.95, 288 pp.

In the ground-breaking book, **The Search for Common Ground**, Professor James Davidson of Purdue University and his associates have undertaken the most extensive study of the beliefs and religious activity of currently practicing, as well as non-practicing, Catholics. By investigating the extent of diversity and similarity among American Catholics, Professor Davidson and his team discovered that the single most important attribute contributing to pluralism in today's Church is not race, ethnicity, or gender, but birth cohort—whether a person's formative religious experiences came before, during, or after Vatican II.

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AN APPETITE FOR GOD

Dorothy Day at 100

Patrick Jordan

Dorothy Day was born on Pineapple Street in Brooklyn Heights on November 8, 1897. On the hundreth anniversary of her birth, her spirit is alive in the Catholic Worker movement she and Peter Maurin founded in 1933. The movement is still building, a rather remarkable feat in the history of American religious communities, now with over 125 houses and farming communes in the United States and in seven other countries. There are a variety of Catholic Worker publications that display strong writing and intellectual vitality: critical voices in the midst of the capitalist state, and lively antidotes to the spirit of bourgeois Christianity. Day and Maurin would be pleased.

In a real sense, Day was an Augustinian figure. She was a captivating, commanding presence, full of personal paradoxes (vulnerable and yet like steel) and inconsistencies (patient but fretful), who nonetheless cohered and remained consistently stalwart. She had been around (as she attests in her classic spiritual autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*), knew the full joys and sorrows of life from her harsh experience, and had gone through a life-searing conversion. She possessed marvelous observational skills and wrote with uncommon beauty and alacrity about her times: describing the challenge of living good, and yes, holy lives in an era of warring empires. She loved heroic figures, and aspired to be one. She hoped that her books would be read by millions and would lead to nonviolent, revolutionary change. She had a sense of humor about herself and her work, and told the story of having been asked to speak at a college on the topic "Saints and Heroes." She was greatly surprised (and delighted) when she found the lecture hall packed. Only later did she discover the reason: her talk had been mistakenly billed "Saints and Eros."

For me, Dorothy Day was the most engaging and engaged person I have ever met. Even now, seventeen years after her death in 1980, I think of her almost daily, with deep affection. What would she have thought of this moral dilemma, this political situation, this church teaching? How would she have approached a certain crisis, dealt with that obnoxious person? If the problem happens to be several-sided and particularly dicey, I can be sure her response would be challenging, distinct, and unpredictable. Not that it would necessarily come as a surprise (she used to love to repeat the phrase, based on her sense of the Gospels, "There are always answers; they are just not calculated to soothe"). Her principles were doggedly clear: The admonitions of the Gospels, the Psalms, and Saint Paul. These ran so deeply in her that they seemed to issue from her marrow. When TV newsman Mike Wallace asked her, "Does God love murderers, does he love a Hitler, a Stalin?" she responded reflexively: "God loves all men, and all men are brothers."

In person, even in her seventies, Day was physically striking: tall, lean, her pale blue eyes keen but not intrusive. In the ideal movie of Dorothy's life, Jessica Lange would be cast in the part. Dorothy was one of those individuals whose presence can affect the tone of whole gatherings. When she

Patrick Jordan *lived at the Catholic Worker from 1969–75, and is* Commonweal*'s managing editor.*

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entered a crowded room, people with their backs to the door would turn spontaneously. Yet she was unfailingly modest, and almost painfully shy in public.

Dorothy's mind, while not that of a trained intellectual, was one of the most acute and supple I have seen at work; she was highly intuitive, shrewd when it came to money, morally rugged. She seemed to know herself with perfect clarity, the fruit of a lifetime of self-examination: "Cleanse us of our unknown faults," she would repeat often. Lecturing about the Catholic Worker, she would say of herself: "There is always a subtle self-aggrandizement. One may not intend it, yet there it crops out to humiliate one. Perhaps it is good to have this come out in the open." Both spiritually and personally, she was the genuine article.

If you went to talk to Dorothy in her small room on the third floor of the East First Street house, where she lived from 1968–76, you might be ensnared for hours. She would regale you with stories. In her early years as a reporter she had interviewed everyone from Trotsky to Jack Dempsey. She knew Eugene O'Neill and Dos Passos, and had inspired Auden. She had testified before Congress on conscientious objection, and while in Moscow in 1971, had defended Solzhenitsyn before the Soviet writers' group, breaking up their meeting. She had been shot at for her civil rights protests, been thrown into solitary confinement; she had taken on both church and state, loved both the opera and folk singer Joan Baez, was a doting mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, received Communion from the hands of the pope, and was a voracious reader. Yet for all that, when you were with her you felt perfectly at home; so much so you wanted to stay, maybe forever—at least I wanted to.

Even after over forty years of the hard Catholic Worker life, Dorothy's voice was young and there was merriment in her laughter. Vivian Gornick, the feminist writer, did a perspective on Day for the *Village Voice* in November 1969. At one point during their four-hour conversation, Gornick sensed that Dorothy had read her thoughts—a not uncommon experience if you spent time with her. While Day had not been critical of Gornick, the experience had raised questions for the latter. According to Martin Buber, the *zaddik* (or righteous teacher) responds to people's needs but first elevates them. Sitting there in the soup kitchen at 36 First Street, Gornick observed in Day "a love that categorically refuses to deny the irreducible humanity" of each person. "I felt in her a woman who has done many things she would wish not to have done;...been alone a long, long time in a curious, exalted, exhausting manner; and more important, that all of this was not a comfortable matter of the past; all of this was an ongoing affair...[in which Day's] faith is put through the fires daily." What comes through in Gornick's article is the journalist's keen respect for the older woman.

Dorothy once told Robert Coles—in a different context—"I have never wanted to lecture people; I have hoped to act in such a way that I will be reaching out to many others who will never be part of the Catholic Worker movement." It seems to have worked with Gornick and countless others.

I recently asked Tom Sullivan and Nina Polcyn Moore, both old friends and Catholic Workers, what made Day tick.

Sullivan, now in his eighties and in poor health in New York City, told me "her spirituality is basic. She started with the saints, and was oriented to the early Christians." For Moore, who now lives in Illinois, it was a matter of "love, divine and human." Dorothy "was not content with anything but the best," Moore told me. "She loved God with all her heart."

But it was Day's constancy in the hard vocation she had chosen that most amazed Moore: "Her availability to people and events, her fidelity to the Gospels, and her embracing the precariousness of the Worker life are keys to her greatness." According to Moore, who traveled with her here and abroad, Day evolved from a young radical to a person of international significance "because she was on fire with the love of God."

Faith was evident in every aspect of Day's life. I suppose it was what attracted so many of us to her: In seeing her faith we experienced our own hoped-for faith being validated and strengthened.

In *From Union Square to Rome*, Dorothy's first book about her conversion, she defines a mystic as someone in love with God: "Not one who loves God, but who is *in love with* God." Years later, she quoted with relish Sonya's last line in *Uncle Vanya*: "I have faith, Uncle, I have fervent, passionate faith."

That faith was evident in every aspect of Day's life. I suppose it is what attracted so many of us to her: In seeing her faith we experienced our own hoped-for faith being validated and strengthened. "Every act of faith increases your faith," she instructed me over and over. But her faith was not a cold series of propositions or legalisms. It was rather a vital relationship. "More and more I see [that] prayer is the answer," she wrote in 1970. "It is the clasp of the hand, the joy and keen delight in the consciousness of that Other. Indeed, it is like falling in love." Not many people can write or speak of prayer that way because we don't practice it. C.S. Lewis advised that we develop not simply a spirituality, but an "appetite for God."

To see Dorothy at prayer was to observe someone completely engrossed. I can vividly picture her praying, off to the left side in one of the pews at Nativity Church in Manhattan. Coupled with this memory is another of my walking into her room one Saturday afternoon as she was listening to the opera. It was Wagner and Dorothy's face was transfixed. She didn't know I was there, and I retreated hastily, almost embarrassed to have intruded at such a private moment. But from those instances I learned something about the intercourse between prayer and ecstasy, and how they

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relate to beauty and love, human and divine.

For Nina Moore, it was Day's constancy in prayer, study, and reading that explained what could be explained about her continued spiritual growth. Lacking the structure of a formal monastic regimen (she was a Benedictine oblate and attached to the Jesu Caritas fellowship), Day had to steal the early morning hours for her spiritual exercises. She did this almost daily, year in and out: "My strength...returns to me with my cup of coffee and the reading of the psalms," she said.

Dorothy did not like to fast (she said her besetting sins were gluttony and sloth), and made sure she had filled her senses by going to the opera (Cavalleria Rusticana) before the fast.

Dorothy's take on the life of the soul was anything but "spiritualized." It was sacramental and sensual, but it was not romantic. "I can't *bear* the romantics," she told Gornick. "I want a religious realist. I want one who prays to see things as they are and do something about it." Her own faith had required a terrible price: the end of her marriage and the breakup of her family: "For me, Christ was not bought for thirty pieces of silver," she wrote forty years after her conversion, "but with my heart's blood. We buy not cheap in this market."

What was essential for Dorothy—and what a popular mid-century retreat movement and the Catholic Worker fostered (*see* box)—was the serious attention and self-discipline required for growth in the life of the spirit. In this matter, I believe, Dorothy's mentor was Friedrich von Hügel, who wrote, in Victorian style, of the "costingness" of such growth. "Plant yourself," von Hügel counseled, "on foundations that are secure: God, Christ, suffering, the Cross." I often saw Dorothy with his short classic, *The Life of Prayer*.

But the life of the spirit has to be cultivated, not merely for the sake of one's own self-improvement, but for the well-being of the whole church. As Dorothy prayed in Rome in 1965: "Give us, O Lord, peace, strength, and joy, so that we in turn may give them to others."

Theologically, Dorothy Day's chief contributions have to do with the issues of freedom, poverty, and violence.

● **Freedom** Perhaps her deepest personal, intuitive insight. Without freedom, there can be neither faith nor love.

When Dorothy first met Peter Maurin in 1932, she was impressed that he was carrying two books in his bulging pockets: Saint Francis and Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin, known as the anarchist prince, was, like Charles de Foucauld, a soldier and scientist. He had forsaken his title and had been jailed and exiled for agitating for reform in Czarist Russia. Even before meeting Maurin, Day held nonviolent anarchist views (she was a decentralist who felt more at home with the Wobblies than the Communists). The theoretical value Day saw in anarchism was its emphasis on personal freedom and responsibility, and on developing social patterns that foster them.

On the spiritual level, the highest rung of being, God gives freedom so that men and women can become human; thus the story of Adam and Eve. Charles Péguy, poet and essayist, and an influence on both Maurin and Day, has God address the issue this way: "But what kind of salvation would it be that was not free?" And then God validates "man's" power "to decide" by declaring: "And that freedom of his is my creation" (and therefore good).

Along with freedom comes the possibility—the inevitability—of sin. On this point Day would refer to Augustine and Julian of Norwich: God has already repaired the worst possible catastrophe (the Fall) by taking on our human flesh, suffering our fate, and redeeming us.

Unlike many birthright Catholics, Day did not feel constrained by the institution. She took as her own Saint Paul's phrase—"You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints" (Ephesians 2:19)—and placed her trust in the church, which she loved and which is itself held accountable to the Gospels. For encouragement, Day looked to the lives of the saints, whom she found to be anything but toadies. Patriarchy? When it came to "this business of 'asking Father' what to do about something," she said, it "never occurred to us."

At Vatican II, she noted her admiration for John Courtney Murray. She felt grateful for the church's clear but long overdue statement on religious freedom and the primacy of conscience.

● **Poverty** As noted above, Maurin brought with him Kropotkin and Francis. For the Christian, poverty is not only a matter of the soul—it is a social concern. It entails not only personal spiritual obligations, but matters of strict justice and compassion.

We begin by looking at our own lives. When asked to address the relations between individuals, Day said, Jesus always emphasized the problems of wealth and poverty. Looking at society this way, Day was explicit: "It is impossible, save by heroic charity, to live in the present social order and be a Christian." After reading Abbie Hoffman's *Revolution for the Hell of It* in 1968, she commented: "A terrifying book; bitterness, hatred, hell unleashed. The fruits of war, materialism, prosperity....God help our children."

Dorothy Day's own approach was twofold. First, there was a line she repeated often from Saint John of the Cross: "Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love." And second, cultivate a life of detachment and share the plight of the poor: "We [Catholic Workers] believe in an economy based on human needs, rather than the profit motive....We are not judging [wealthy] individuals, but are trying to make a judgment on the system...which we try to withdraw from as much as possible....What is worst of all is *using* God and religion to bolster up our own greed, our own

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attachment to property, and putting God and country on an equality." Finally, she pointed out, "we are not going to win the masses to Christianity until we live it," and that included having a willingness to embrace poverty.

For Day, to live poorly meant to *share the life of the poor*: "Let us love to live with the poor because they are especially loved by Christ." Each person who presents himself or herself to us—rich, middle class, or poor—must be given love, "not because it might be Christ...but because they *are* Christ." How did she know for sure? "Because we have seen his hands and his feet in the poor around us....We start by loving them for him, and soon we love them for themselves, each one a unique person, most special....It is through such exercises that we grow, and the joy of our vocation assures us we are on the right path." According to Kate Hennessy, Day's granddaughter, "she turned the life of poverty into something dynamic, full of richly simple moments for those who have nothing."

How Dorothy Day managed to keep her psychological wholeness over the years in the disorder, disease, mental confusion, and violence that mark Catholic Worker houses was a practical miracle to me. "Pray and endure," she would repeat. Some of her stamina came from knowing the critical distinction between love and pity. "The law of love is reciprocity," Georges Bernanos had written, "and reciprocity is not possible where there is pity." Martin Buber explained it more eloquently: "Help is no virtue, but an artery of existence." To really help someone, however, "the helper must live with the other; only help that arises out of living with the other can stand before the eyes of God." Day insisted that she "would not dare write or speak or follow the vocation God has given me to work with the poor and for peace if I did not have the constant reassurance of the Mass."

● **Violence** I need not recount at length Day's work for justice, peace, and nonviolence. Historically, she had a critical if indirect bearing on Vatican II's condemnation of nuclear war and its endorsement of the right to conscientious objection. Her pacifist stand in World War II was intensely controversial, not only among Americans in general but even among Catholic Workers; Mike Wallace's question indicates that it still is today. Day's repeated stints in jail for protesting war preparation and the war economy—including her challenge that people withdraw from participating in both—achieved modest success, symbolically—by helping to end the air-raid drills in New York City during the fifties and sixties—and practically in the lives of not a few individuals who refused induction, changed their jobs, or resisted paying war taxes.

Day's staunch views on pacifism drew a deep line between just-war teaching and gospel nonviolence. She shared with Saint James the view that the roots of violence are fear, lack of forgiveness, and greed. Fear leads us to strike out at enemies; it may even help to create them. Day believed the Catholic Worker must be a school of nonviolence. The young volunteers who came in search of their vocation, she wrote, "learn not only to love with compassion, but to overcome fear, that dangerous emotion that precipitates violence. They may go on feeling fear, but they know the means [the 'spiritual weapons,' as she called them, of self-discipline, willingness to take up the cross, forgiving 'seventy times seven,' and readiness to lay down one's life for one's fellows] to overcome it." Here, prayer and daily Mass were the best offense. From her own testimony of sitting through nights of threatened violence in the racially divided South in the 1960s, it is prayer that "gives courage."

Was she critical of her own track record? Always. Repeatedly I heard her say of herself and her co-workers, quoting the Letter to the Hebrews: "We have not yet resisted unto blood." She felt she might yet prove to be as avenging as any potential adversary.

One of Day's most notable achievements for peace took place quietly and behind the scenes. In Rome in 1965 for the last session of the council, she joined a small group of women at a convent to fast for ten days, on water only, as the conciliar debate raged over what would be the church's official teaching on modern war.

Dorothy did not like to fast (she said her besetting sins were gluttony and sloth), and made sure she had filled her senses by going to the opera (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) before the fast. Her report in the November 1965 *Catholic Worker* included the daily schedule of the group and concluded as follows:

5th Annual Nostra Aetate Dialogue

Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophet of Social Activism

Two perspectives and a public discussion.

Presenters: Rev. Daniel Berrigan, S.J.
Writer and Social Activist

Rabbi Eugene Borowitz
Hebrew Union College—
Jewish Institute of Religion

Introducer: Ms. Yolanda King
Performer and Writer

Respondent: Dr. Susannah Heschel
Case Western Reserve University

Monday, November 10, 1997 at 6 P.M.

Fordham University at Lincoln Center
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As for me, I did not suffer at all from the hunger or headache or nausea which usually accompany the first few days of a fast, but I had offered my fast in part for the victims of famine all over the world, and it seemed to me that I had very special pains. They were certainly of a kind I have never had before, and they seemed to pierce the vary marrow of my bones....They were not like the arthritic pains, which, aggravated by tension and fatigue, are part of my life now that I am sixty-eight. One accepts them as part of age, and also part and parcel of the life of work, which is the lot of the poor. So often I see grandmothers in Puerto Rican families bearing the burden of children, the home, cooking, sewing, and contributing to the work of mother and father, who are trying to make a better life for their children. I am glad to share their fatigue with them.

But these pains...seemed to reach into my very bones, and I could only feel that I had been given some little intimation of the hunger of the world. God help us, living as we do, in the richest country in the world, and so far from approaching the voluntary poverty we esteem and reach toward....May we try harder to do more in the future.

This is vintage Dorothy Day: the immediacy of concerns; the challenge, complexity, and interrelation of the big issues (war and poverty); the incorporation of her personal experience; the self-criticism and pledge to do better; and the radical, foundational nature of her Christian perspective.

No retrospective of Dorothy Day's spirituality would be complete without mentioning her tremendous personal struggles. These centered, in her later years, on two related areas: discouragement and perseverance. From her earliest Catholic Worker writings, Day speaks of discouragement in the work (*see, House of Hospitality*). The utter hopelessness of the situation of some of the people with whom she lived ("we are a community of need, not an intentional community") included physical violence, broken families, addiction, suicides, evictions, fires, poor food, attrition of co-workers. All of these could be overwhelming. Dorothy was sometimes so jangled by them—and by family concerns, overwork, travel, writing, speechmaking, and innumerable obligations—that she would break into tears. "Don't let yourself get into this state!" she would tell me, before escaping for a reprieve to her sister's or daughter's.

Dorothy also told me that twice in her life she had overcome serious bouts of depression by reading herself out of them (she recommended Dickens), but said that if she ever were to experience such depression again, she would consider shock treatment.

Another line of cure—which she had learned from her mother—was to clean the house. And then there were the theater and music: "Saw *My Fair Lady*. A very good cure for melancholy. Theme: Man's capacity to change." Again, "I am now listening to a concert, Brahms's Second Symphony, joyful music to heal my sadness. All day I have felt sad. I am oppressed by a sense of failure, of sin."

On the conjunction between what Dorothy called "the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the soul," she reflected: "It seems to me that they often intermingle." This led her to prescribe Ruskin's "Duty of Delight": "I found a copy of Ruskin, *The True and the Beautiful*," she wrote while visiting her daughter in Vermont, and "the beautiful quotation on the duty of delight. Making cucumber pickles, chili sauce, and grape juice. Delightful smells." And the "duty" must be taken seriously, not only for oneself but "for the sake of others who are on the verge of desperation."

And then there was use of the other serious spiritual weapons: prayer, Scripture, community, the sacraments. The ancient Christian writers had long been concerned with *acedia*, spiritual sloth, which is associated with a failure against hope. Depression, a modern manifestation, is, in part, a constricting of that virtue, and of the power of the will to act. Day often prayed to Saint Ephraim, one of the desert fathers. He seemed to have struggled with the problem of discouragement, and spoke of the distress caused by his own procrastination. The best practical remedy for such a condition, Day noted, was "faithfulness to the means to overcome it: recitation of the psalms each day, prayer and solitude, and by these means arriving—or hoping to arrive—at a state of well-being." The psalms she found particularly helpful in this regard: "I have stilled and quieted my soul" (Ps. 131), and "Relieve the troubles of my heart" (Ps. 25). She would also quote Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 8—"Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ"—and his advice not to judge others or even oneself, for Christ understands our failures: he was, after all, the world's greatest failure.

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Among contemporary spiritual writings, she recommended in this regard Dom Hubert van Zeller's *Approach to Calvary*: "Awoke at 5:30," she penned in 1965. "Usual depression over failures, inefficiency, incapacity to cope. Van Zeller's book invaluable, teaching on how to accept all this discouragement, which he says will increase with age....One must just keep going."

And that connects with the matter of perseverance, a subject on which she corresponded sporadically with Thomas Merton: "I am often full of fear about my final perseverance," she told him in 1960. But then, during his own long struggles with the problem, she advised: Your work "is the work God wants of you, no matter how much you want to run away from it."

She eventually came to terms with the fact that her difficulties were not going to end in this life. In the last book she gave me, *Spiritual Autobiography of Charles de Foucauld* (she was always giving gifts and books, prayer books and Bibles especially), she had underlined the following passage from de Foucauld: "Our difficulties are not a transitory state of affairs....No, they are the normal state of affairs and we should reckon on being in *angustia temporum* ['in straightness of times,' Dan. 9:21] all our lives, so far as the good we want to do is concerned."

In 1960, Dorothy Day commented favorably on a then-current appraisal of the state of the American Catholic church, rendered by the Jesuit theologian, Gustave Weigel. Three things were most needed in the U.S. church, said Weigel: Austerity, preached and lived; a deeper awareness of the reality of God; and a truer and more effective love for all people, including those who are our enemies. One could not find a more succinct summary of Day's own views. In 1968, she complained that the Catholic press in the United States was too much concerned with the problems of authority, birth control, and celibacy, whereas the real problems were "war, race, poverty and wealth, violence, sex, and drugs." Some things change slowly. Or not at all.

Without the saints, Bernanos said fifty years ago, the church is only dead stones: Without them, the very grace lying within the church's institutional and sacramental forms remains fallow. Despite the unparalleled upheavals of our times, grace has not remained hidden. We have seen its appealing power. □

The Lacouture retreat

Recently, a discussion has arisen concerning Dorothy Day's association with the so-called Lacouture retreat (*see* Brigid O'Shea Merriman's *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day*, University of Notre Dame Press; and David Scott and Mike Aquilina's *Weapons of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Father John Hugo*, Our Sunday Visitor Books).

Onesimus Lacouture (1881–1951) was a Canadian Jesuit who preached a retreat based on his reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola. The retreat—characterized by some as rigorist—called all Christians to a life of heroic charity and self-sacrifice.

Dorothy Day was introduced to the retreat in the late 1930s and it played a significant role in her life and that of the Catholic Worker for the next fifteen years. One of the chief U.S. practitioners of the retreat was John Hugo (1911–85), a priest of the Pittsburgh diocese. Dorothy made the retreat under his direction a number of times, the last being in 1976.

In 1939, under episcopal pressure, Lacouture's Jesuit superiors forbade him to preach the retreat and exiled him. Father Hugo was also reassigned to the hinterlands, and was, for a period, precluded from preaching the retreat. Despite these setbacks, Day continued to foster the retreat. She called it "the bread of the strong" and "the great retreat," and wrote that it had given "a new meaning and vigor to our lives." She told her friend Sister Peter Claver Fahy that "at last I have found what I was looking for when I left my Communist friends and became a Catholic."

For all that, Nina Polcyn Moore recalls that the retreat was "harsh" and "wooden," and that it was Day herself who made it "more livable and lovable. Dorothy brought to it her own long loneliness." Tom Sullivan concurs. He told me that Day "bought" the retreat but that "she had her own approach" to it. His conclusion: "She took what she wanted from the retreat."

Some years later, in the sixties—and let me emphasize that she was *not* writing about Hugo—Day noted concerning her spiritual guides that she must "be grateful, uncritical of *God's* direction of me, even if I see with my human, critical faculties, the limitations of my advisers." My sense was that she surpassed most if not all of them.

Reading Hugo in the collection cited above, I felt I had fallen into a time warp. What comes through is a certain rigidity and literalness. The writing struck me as lacking the expansive catholicity of Dorothy Day, so rich in language, musicality, and the human touch. Perhaps that is too harsh a judgment, but how different the Hugo book is from reading John XXIII's *Journal of a Soul*, for which Dorothy also had the highest regard. Pope John, too, was steeped in the formalism of post-Tridentine spiritual theology, but what a different table he spread! P.J.

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Richard Alleva

CITY OF ANGELS

'L.A. Confidential'

The movies have made us familiar with the good-bad cop. In fact, by now he is almost as much a stereotype as the strictly honorable detective or the thoroughly corrupt one. And what has helped to make the good-bad cop cliché is the fact that his seeming complexity is usually confined to the first reel and is jettisoned once the plot gets underway. In the recent *Cop Land*, for instance, Harvey Keitel starts off as an interesting mixture of compassion and rancor, bigotry and loyalty, but is soon revealed as a monochromatic monster ready to murder anyone who gets in the way, even fellow policemen. I hate to give Frank McConnell occasion to gloat but the TV heroes of "Law and Order" and "N.Y.P.D. Blue" make most of their big-screen counterparts look like stick figures.

Most, not all. In *L.A. Confidential* the characterizations are truly layered; vices and virtues not only coexist within each of the three detective-protagonists but, more disturbingly, some of the virtues *depend* upon vices, like a bright color primed by a less brilliant undercoating.

Take young Ed Exley. The son of a hero-cop, he is determined not only to equal his deceased father in gutsiness but to defy the so-called code of silence that keeps police crimes from being reported by fellow officers. When Ed, as the night supervisor of a station house, sees detectives brutalizing Mexican prisoners, he tries to stop them and, failing in that, courageously testifies against them. But wait a minute, is it really courage? The police riot has been in the newspapers and department honchos are therefore desperately seeking someone to epitomize the New Improved L.A. Cop. By testifying, Exley is consciously shoehorning himself into that role. He's a Serpico, yes, but he's a Serpico on the make.

So Exley's strictly a hypocrite, then? Well, in the middle of the movie, this ambitious twerp reopens a certain murder case that made him a hero and ensured his career when he (apparently) solved it. By reexamining it, Exley may be destroying himself but he's willing to risk that for the sake of the truth. So, a true hero after all! But hold on, the movie isn't over, Exley's ambition is still feeding on his soul, and there will be a few more surprises before the conclusion. The Australian actor Guy Pearce limns this gallant prig magisterially. There is a close-up of his face as he listens to a superior offering cynical praise and an equally cynical warning. Pearce's mouth, at first straight and prim, gradually forms a smarmy smile, then straightens again grimly as he takes note of his boss's warning. That quickly appearing and disappearing smile expresses something both repellent and formidable in Exley's character: pridefulness on a short, taut leash.

Then there is Bud White, described by Exley as a thug. And so he seems to be until we find out that his violence is unleashed mainly in the defense of brutalized women. As a boy, White saw his mother beaten to death by his father and he's been pursuing the old man ever since within the thugs who maltreat women. Bud White the white knight? You may be tempted to think so until he walks into a room where an unarmed suspect is sitting and puts a bullet into him. Playing this psychopathic Galahad, Russell Crowe (another Aussie actor) displays something of Mel Gibson's ticking-bomb tension, but he's reached deeper into himself than Gibson usually goes. Dangling a dishonest witness by his heels outside a high window, White is doing something right out of the *Lethal Weapon* series, but whereas we know Gibson will soon make a wisecrack and haul the scoundrel in, we're not so sure that White won't actually drop the man, so successful is Crowe in projecting White's abiding dangerousness.

For the role of the silken publicity hound Jack Vincennes, Kevin Spacey provides his reliable brand of feline smugness to which he has this time added a droplet of compassion. While Vincennes chats with a homosexual

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prostitute who is being used as bait in an extortion deal to which the detective is an accomplice, Spacey, through the subtlest deployment of body language and facial expression, makes us feel Vincennes's initial contempt for the boy turning into pity (and is there the slightest hint of sexual attraction, too, though Vincennes is heterosexual?), a pity that will later spur the detective to avenge the boy's murder.

The excellent screenplay, by Brian Heigeland and director Curtis Hanson out of James Ellroy's novel, is not a detective story that includes rich characterizations as a mere bonus. Rather, the detection itself depends upon the character traits of the detectives and is all too often retarded by their lack of interaction. The central mystery—the slaughter of several people in a restaurant during what seems to be an ordinary robbery—can't be solved at first because the three investigators, each coming to the case from a different angle, detest one another and therefore can't put their partial insights together into one overall solution. Only when each realizes that the honor of his work is worth more than the satisfactions of hatred does the case get solved.

Yet there is a major flaw in the script. Since the theme of mutual parasitism between the police and the media is announced in this movie's title and developed quite well through most of the film (Exley's career is hyped as if he were a rising starlet; Vincennes revels in being technical advisor for a "Dragnet"-like TV show; White comes into contact with a brothel where the whores all resemble movie stars), we expect this theme to inform the solution of the mystery, too. Alas, it doesn't. The secret behind the restaurant slaughter might have served for any conventional police story but proves a letdown for this unconventional one. Compare this with *Chinatown*, in which the recurring themes of water-theft and incest prove to be at the heart of the mystery.

Director Curtis Hanson's most financially successful movies to date—*The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* and *The River Wild*—were expertly wrapped packages containing nothing. Here, inspired by a story of substance, he brings off one memorable moment after another. Such as: Gunfire smashes through a window and kills some gangsters. The bodies of the hoods lie on the floor and there is stillness for a few seconds. And then...slivers of glass fall from the shot-out window frames and tinkle to the floor. The effect would be pretty if the context weren't so ghastly.

In another scene, sardonicism is expertly wedded to pity. As Vincennes comes upon the body of the murdered male prostitute, the camera bears down to a close-up of the youth's still innocent face, and we hear on the sound track a line from a song, "I have grown so much wiser now."

Dante Spinotti's photography doesn't italicize the excellent period details provided by Jeannine Oppewall's production design but concentrates on the faces of the three detectives and the people they encounter. The deliberately sickly lighting encloses them all within a clammy atmosphere. In this movie, even when people aren't sweating, you feel they're sweating inside. □

Frank McConnell

A NUN'S 'STORY'

Sister Wendy on PBS

I have to be honest. I'm a good teacher. No: I'm a *really* good teacher. But when I started showing my wife the tapes of "Sister Wendy's Story of Painting"—I'd already watched them through once—after about five minutes of the little nun's monologue on Caravaggio, Celeste turned to me, saying, "She's better than you are."

"I *know* that," I grumbled into my brandy and water. "Just watch the damn show."

Produced by the BBC and WGBH in Boston, "Sister Wendy" ran on Sunday nights, September 7 through October 5, on PBS. But if you missed any of it, relax, this great series should be shown again and again. In fact, it should be owned by anybody who cares about the history of Western art, the craft of teaching, or the possibilities for TV to be something—well—fine.

And it's all pretty simple. Sister Wendy Beckett, about whose interesting self more later, just talks about the course of painting from the cave drawings at Lascaux through Egyptian funeral murals to Picasso, Jackson Pollock, and Andy Warhol, usually filmed standing before the original work under discussion. Just talks.

Sounds like the Prozac-friendly course in "art appreciation" a lot of us took in college to jack up the old GPA, *nicht wahr*? But *nein*; or, rather, it's that hoary approach raised, by a brilliant and passionate teacher, to the level of high, very high, performance art. Late in the series, Wendy, in an aside, says that she's sadly, not creative like the painters she explicates. And it's the only dumb thing she says in five hours of unremitting talk.

Because her talk, for me at least, is as much a joy as the great works she talks *about*. I didn't, actually, take that dreaded class in "Art Appreciation," and my visual imagination, and my sense of continuity of Western art, are both just a little stronger than that of, say, Bob Dole. But looking at the paintings, and *listening* to Wendy talk about them, I got a feeling I hadn't had in thirty years: that of an eager, wide-eyed and bushy-tailed student learning about a world he didn't even know was *there*.

Now Northrop Frye once said that you can't really "teach" literature—or music, or painting—the way you "teach" physics or chemistry: you can only convey a habit of attention to the work (there

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Poetry

Peter E. Murphy

Miss Besieged Sarajevo

May, 1993

Imela Nogic, 17, blonde and shrapnel scarred, embraces
her runners up and smiles a flare bright smile.
Although she has won, she is afraid her boyfriend
will think her dirty for prancing in the swimsuit.
Although she has won, she is afraid.

Imela Nogic, 17, would love to compete for Miss World,
if only her boyfriend and her father would not object,
if only she could leave her city of snipers and shells.
She carries no flowers as she limps down the runway.
She unveils a banner, "Don't Let Them Kill Us!"

Imela Nogic, 17, says, "Plans? I have no plans.
I may not even be alive tomorrow." Behind her,
judges sit with Uzis between their legs.
They have no talent to decide in Sarajevo, no evening gown.
There is no prize. The audience breaks into silence.

The Forgotten Man

The man who forgot himself rises
out of his cardboard sleep into the concrete morning
to relieve himself of hunger.
Everything has acquired use—trees have become lampposts,
deer have turned into taxicabs that whistle down
Park Avenue on cloven tires of rain.

He walks among the citizens of this canyon
and sees himself reflected in plate glass, blurred
by blue buses, yellow livery, gray commuters
that dash across his own dim image in the shiny panes.

Eventually, when he recalls his faceless face upon well-fed
mannequins does his life lose sense. He sees himself shop
after shop with his palms open to tokens and change,
open to a currency that will carry him through elements
that are benign, where the trains that rumble beneath
the surface wheeze silently all through the screaming night.

is no equation for a great poem). And Kenneth Burke, whom Frye admired, said that all a critic could do was "dance an attitude" before the work—King David before the Ark? And Frye and Burke were both great creative teachers. And by their standards, Sister Wendy is one good dancer.

She approaches a painting, gazes at it, and starts to talk about it, pointing out its details and its hidden story, gazes once more at it and walks on to the next shot. Of *course* it's a performance: great teaching has to be, at least, that. But there's an enormous difference between performing passion and impersonating it (watch a Michael Jackson video sometime). What's clear from the getgo is that this woman is in love with painting because for her painting is—as *she* says—one of the things that incarnate our common humanity. Like all mystics, she's possessed. And like the better mystics, she's articulate.

And it doesn't hurt—this is *tee-vee*—that she's cute as a parcel of buttons. Not Sally (yech!) Field "Flying Nun" cute, though. She's sixty-seven, small and stooped, speaks with a lisp, and owns a face so plain, so *unfinished*, as to have that metaphysically radiant ugliness that only the British get just right (every time I watch her I think of W.H. Auden's Dickensian phiz). In a word, she's irresistible. But there's a snake in the grass. Her charm masks, and none too well, an intelligence about, and love for, art that are, in their ferocity, scary.

Wendy Beckett was born in South Africa. At age sixteen—her family had returned to Scotland—she entered the Sisters of Notre Dame. The order sent her to Oxford, where she majored in English literature, graduating with highest honors. Thence back to South Africa where she taught—eventually becoming a Reverend Mother—until ill health forced her to retire and return to England in 1970. That year the pope declared her a "consecrated virgin" (thank God for popespeak). She now lives, a daily communicant, in a trailer on the grounds of a Carmelite convent in Norfolk, presumably adding to her already dozen or more books on art. All of which makes her

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sound so sweet. In fact, she's so funky.

LeRoi Jones once said that art is whatever makes you proud to be a human being. And it makes Wendy proud, obviously, because it also proves that human beings can have a little spark of God about them. Her taste is small-c catholic, and deeply sensuous: painting, more than any of the other arts, is *about* the glory of color, texture, and above all the endless glory of the human body. One of the multiple gems of the series is her discussion of Manet's scandalous *Olympia*, a painting of a naked prostitute awaiting her next trick. After Wendy's witty and precise discussion of the sexiness and pathos of the canvas, she pauses, gazes at it again, and, I swear to God, blows a little kiss to it before she walks out of frame. And you know she means it, and that is "dancing an attitude."

Ditto with her discussion of the funeral painting for the Egyptian magistrate Ramose, the mural *The Baker and His Wife* from Pompeii, the *Mona Lisa* (yeah—she even makes *that* tired icon come alive again), Warhol's Marilyn Monroe silkscreens, *und so weiter*. My personal favorite moment is her wildly funny examination of Gainsborough's wedding portrait of *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, where, just examining the placement of the figures, the landscape, and the vapid faces of the bride and groom, she paints her own verbal portrait of an oaf and a prig whose marriage is bound for the storm clouds looming over the scene. Somewhere, Jane Austen is smiling down on this segment.

Not that her catholicity is of the everything-is-everything-oh-wow-man sort. Never trust a teacher without strong crushes and firm grumps. She loves Caravaggio a little more than she logically should, allows her awe at Velasquez to reduce her to an elegant stammer over *Las Meninas*, and, most wonderfully, showing a work by one of *my* favorite painters, whispers, "I am besotted with Klee." And she admits to being unmoved by Renoir's relentlessly prettified universe; frankly states that Picasso's monstrosity as a human being is *there* in his deliberate uglification of the women he loved and hated; and, again wonderfully, after discussing the significance of Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* (you know, the melting watches), glances askance at it, mumbles, "Horrible painting!" and strolls coldly on.

But enough. This is a great series, showing a great teacher acting out her holy—a word I don't toss around—passion for a very great subject. "Yet I am the necessary angel of earth," writes Wallace Stevens, "since, in my sight, you see the earth again." That's a pretty good definition of what all art does, showing us the beauty that was there but that we'd missed. It's also, I've always thought, what a good teacher of art—painting, literature, whatever—should try to be. "Look!" you say (it's one of Wendy's most-used words), "it's there! It's bloody beautiful! You can make it yours, all you have to do is love it!" And that's all you *can* do. And by that token, Sister Wendy Beckett is one of our necessary angels: maybe, even, when she's not on the job. □

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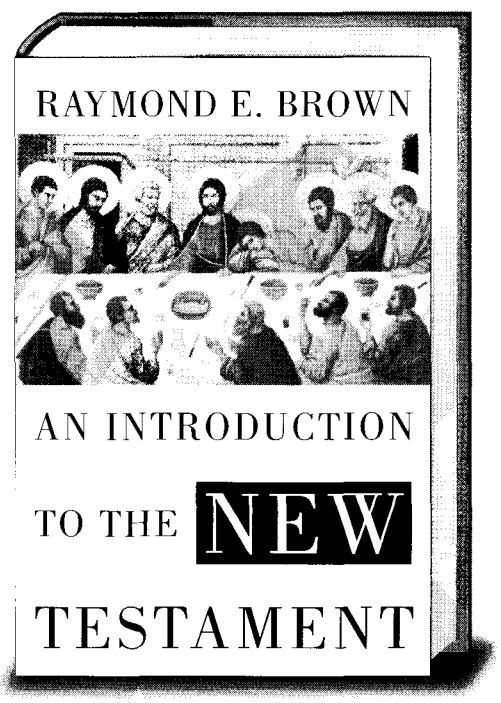

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Long day's journey from Rome

Down the Nights and Down the Days
Eugene O'Neill's Catholic Sensibility
Edward L. Shaughnessy
University of Notre Dame Press, $28.95, 220 pp.

Peter Quinn

In the last act of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, James Tyrone and his son, Edmund, go another round in their endless verbal sparring. Edmund mocks the old man's Irish-Catholic chauvinism: "Yes, facts don't mean a thing, do they? What you want to believe, that's the only truth! [Derisively] Shakespeare was an Irish Catholic, for example." Tyrone stands his ground. "So he was," he tells his son. "The proof is in his plays."

In *Down the Nights and Down the Days: Eugene O'Neill's Catholic Sensibility*, Edward Shaughnessy doesn't try to do to O'Neill what Tyrone did to Shakespeare. The intent of this probing and incisive book isn't to claim that the greatest American playwright was a closet Catholic whose faith is encrypted in his plays. Yet, while Shaughnessy doesn't revise the standard accounts of O'Neill's loss of faith, he does far more than pay lip service to O'Neill's religious upbringing. Shaughnessy faces the harder, deeper questions: What is there in O'Neill's work that is specifically Catholic? How important was Catholicism to his vision? What is its significance in his plays?

For Shaughnessy, the key word is sensibility, which he defines as "a cultural imprint on memory...an individual's own psychological experience in receiving the world view and the established values of the group." O'Neill's mind and imagination—his sensibility—were formed in the crucible of postfamine Irish Catholicism of the nineteenth century.

The famine was the defining event of modern Irish history, a period of suffering and humiliation in which millions either died or were scattered to Britain, Canada, and the United States. Many found themselves, as James Tyrone says of his family, without "clothes enough to wear, or food enough to eat."

In the wake of this trauma, the Catholic church was confirmed as the repository of Irish identity. The postfamine church was the antidote to the disorder, disruption, and dislocation that marked the Irish passage from rural serfdom to the capitalist metropolises of England and North America. Educator, disciplinarian, companion, comforter, and organizer of the Irish wherever they were, the church was an instrument of ethnic survival as well as a guarantor of personal salvation.

The church in America was shaped by the Irish and reflected their experience. The nativist hostility that the church faced reinforced its emphasis on discipline, loyalty, and obedience. Although, as Shaughnessy points out, this "created a climate unpropitious to the free expression of opinion," it was "not against the will of the faithful."

O'Neill was among those who rebelled. His discovery of his mother's morphine addiction was a shattering experience, and he found little solace in the harsh, unyielding regime of the Christian Brothers, his teachers at the time. He set out on his own path, despairing of any God-given answer to humanity's broken, corrupted condition.

Describing another famous artist-apostate possessed of a Catholic sensibility, the literary scholar Beryl Schlossman writes of James Joyce that his "Catholicism, often dismissed as an artifact, is at the source of his symbolic vision and its imaginative constructs; it led him to read the writings of the great mystics and perhaps to conceive of his own experience of language in their terms."

As Shaughnessy makes clear, O'Neill's Catholicism was also more than "an artifact." Follower of Freud and Nietzsche though he was, O'Neill didn't regard sin as a historical curiosity. Even in a world without God, the old religious definitions held true. Sin separated us from one another. We suffered because of it, and we inflicted that suffering on others. "In all my plays," O'Neill said, "sin is punished and redemption takes place."

Shaughnessy carefully examines the impact of O'Neill's enduring Catholic mindset on specific plays and, in so doing, enriches our understanding of these works. Beyond that, Shaughnessy puts in perspective as never before the tension between O'Neill's despair and his desire to believe.

Unlike Joyce, O'Neill felt more bereft than liberated by his loss of faith. He wrote to Sister Mary Leo Tierney, in 1928, of the blend of emptiness and longing that had replaced his belief in God: "Perhaps they also serve who only search in vain! That they search—and not without knowing a black despair that believers never know—that is their justification and pride as they stare blindly at the blind sky! The Jesus who said, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?' must surely understand them—and love them a little, I think, and forgive them if no Savior comes today to make these blind to see who may not cure themselves."

It is either a great irony or a mark of God's own taste for strange interludes that, though O'Neill remained an unbeliever, he was instrumental in the con-

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version of a saint. Dorothy Day traveled in the same radical circles as O'Neill in Greenwich Village during World War I. It was there in a saloon appropriately named "The Hellhole" that he recited for her Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound of Heaven."

Never a cynic in the purest sense—a critic who sees self-interest lurking behind every human act—O'Neill played, in the case of Dorothy Day, a cynic in the original meaning of its Greek root: *kyón*, or hound. Shaughnessy recounts that, along with reciting Thompson's poem, O'Neill urged her to read Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. Acting as God's mastiff perhaps, the playwright nudged the pilgrim forward on her journey to Rome.

He chose a different road for himself. He searched the labyrinthine ways of his family's past—addiction, guilt, unspoken love, articulated disdain, the buried wound of Irish dispossession and defeat, the war of fathers and sons, and husbands and wives, black legacies of greed and desire, long day's agony turning into barren, bitter years. Dorothy Day continued to pray for him. "There is no time with God," she wrote after his death, "and I would be sinning against hope, faith, and charity if I did not believe that my prayers, and whoever else is praying for the soul of Gene, are heard."

In the end, they both found fame and immortality of the human sort. Who knows what he found beyond? In the "Father's house are many mansions," and could it be, thanks to her prayers, there was a place for him, a stage beside the great banquet hall in which the gifted and the ordinary have equal place?

Edward Shaughnessy's achievement is to give us an eloquent, insightful, sympathetic perspective on O'Neill's relationship to the Catholic faith that is utterly free of academic polemicizing or sectarian axe-grinding. This is a book that will be of enduring interest to readers and scholars of O'Neill, to students of the theater, and to pilgrim souls of every kind. □

Peter Quinn *is the author of* The Banished Children of Eve.

PHILOSOPHER PRESIDENT

The Art of the Impossible
Politics as Morality in Practice
Václav Havel
Knopf, $24, 373 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

President Václav Havel of the Czech Republic is one of the great spokesmen for the "return to Europe" of countries formerly compelled to inhabit that political nowhereland called "Eastern Europe." He is an urbane intellectual, a playwright, and a moralist. That he is also the president of a nation-state is for him one of life's great ironies, even miracles, and he claims that he can scarcely believe it most of the time: one day an infamous dissident slated for harassment and incarceration; the next a famous dissident addressing hundreds of thousands gathered in Wenceslaus Square in defiance of a corrupt, authoritarian regime; and then a bit further on, the president of (then) Czechoslovakia proclaiming, on January 1, 1990: "People, your government has returned to you!"

It has not been an easy return. Havel knew it would not be. In October 1992, in a conversation with a small group gathered in Prague, Havel was sober to the point of being somber. The two republics were breaking up. The process of crafting a new constitution was then frustrated—so much so that Havel declared that he felt rather like locking up a group of clever constitutional lawyers and not permitting them to leave the building until they had forged a draft constitution. And, as well, Europe, his part of Europe, had "entered the long tunnel at the end of the light." This was a brilliant reversal of a standard metaphor. Havel has never been a utopian; indeed, much of his life has been dedicated to defeating all utopian politics, all ends-of-histories and overarching world views that promote ugly social engineering and destroy human freedom, mutual self-help, and even minimal decency.

And yet the title of this book is *The Art*

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"Watch your step—we're dealing with a professional here."

of the Impossible. What, then, does Havel mean? He means hopefulness, a kind of canny insightfulness, energy for the tasks ahead. So much has happened so fast. How can one not believe in "miracles" [his word]? But such miracles are not wholly within our grasp. At best, we can see the possibilities immanent in a situation and screw up our courage in order to act, knowing that human events are not wholly under our own control. Much of this collection of speeches and essays written between 1990 and 1996 traverses the in-between—in-between quiescence and arrogant overreach. That is Havel's terrain. How well does he traverse it? Passing well, I would say, although he does seem to falter from time to time and he thinks aloud about the reasons why. He struggles with Oxford fellow Timothy Garton Ash's critique of intellectuals in politics, for example. Ash had worried in print about the confusion of independent intellectual and practicing politician that he believed plagued post-1989 Europe: become one or the other, Ash more or less urged. Either stay outside and maintain your intellectual independence or take up a post and start to act, well, Weberian. (Weber, remember, distinguished between an ethic of "ultimate ends," too good for this world, and an "ethic of responsibility," one that is forced to choose between imperfect alternatives.)

Many of the most interesting reflections in this volume show Havel grappling with Ash's criticism. He understands "how difficult it is for an independent intellectual to adjust overnight to the world of practical politics when he has spent his whole life critically analyzing the world and defending certain chemically pure tenets." And there is a tendency for the intellectual to "resort to philosophical meditation, which in most cases makes things worse" than they would have been if he had just opted for an alternative, even a bad one. Another temptation is to launch into "complex reflections that voters find difficult to follow"—a charge lodged frequently against Havel—when what he ought to be about is saying "in clear and unambiguous terms that he is running for office because he is the best person for the job...." He shouldn't spend a lot of time hesitating, doubting, refusing to fight, questioning his own motives—again the sort of thing Havel is taxed with. He should shoulder the burden that is his and just get down to it.

Practical politics, yes, but never a politics shorn of morality. Havel's great fear is that relinquishing a politics of high morality often leads to a politics of brute instrumentality; thus, he rejects politics that is simply "the art of the possible." No, one should lift up politics. It is a nobler craft and a more demanding art than the technicians and power mongers allow. Politics has to do with hope and with purpose, with the articulation of a "spiritual dimension." It has to do with accepting responsibility, not of a total and unlimited sort, but of a carefully defined sort, and going on to approach that responsibility neither from a "will to power nor an ideological vision of the world but, rather, a moral stance."

What does Havel have in mind here? The verities and virtues he embraces are basic decencies, Christian in origin, but honed and shaped through the struggles with human dignity, rights, and power in modernity. Havel is clear that the source of the sense of responsibility he embraces is "metaphysical." This probably doesn't win many votes, and it frustrates some of his admirers and friends, especially when he starts to talk about "the order of Being" and the like. These Heideggerian turns of phrase turn lots of folks off. And I must say that the references to "Being" at times seem rather off-hand in these writings. Perhaps Havel needs to flesh out a bit more the conceptual and moral work his frequent references to Being play in his overall moral and political thinking.

That having been said, it is refreshing to read the words—most of them spoken aloud—of an erudite thinker and writer and political leader who unabashedly celebrates certain universal truths and rebukes "moral relativism" and "the denial of any kind of spirituality, a proud disdain for everything suprapersonal," and other features characteristic of the late modern West. For Havel, human beings need a "transcendental anchor,...the only genuine source of [their] responsibility and self-respect." Without these we forfeit much of the credibility of our own political affirmations and we blight our spirits. Havel manages to say all this in a way that avoids tub-thumping and breast-beating. But he is insistent. If we pit politics and morality against one another, we give politics over to the devil. We lose "the moral integrity of society" and relinquish "responsibility for human lives."

There are those who believe Havel's moment has come and gone. I don't think we've arrived at that moment yet. □

Jean Bethke Elshtain *is the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago.*

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THEOLOGY DOES ITS JOB

The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology
Mark Jordan
University of Chicago Press, $24.95, 196 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

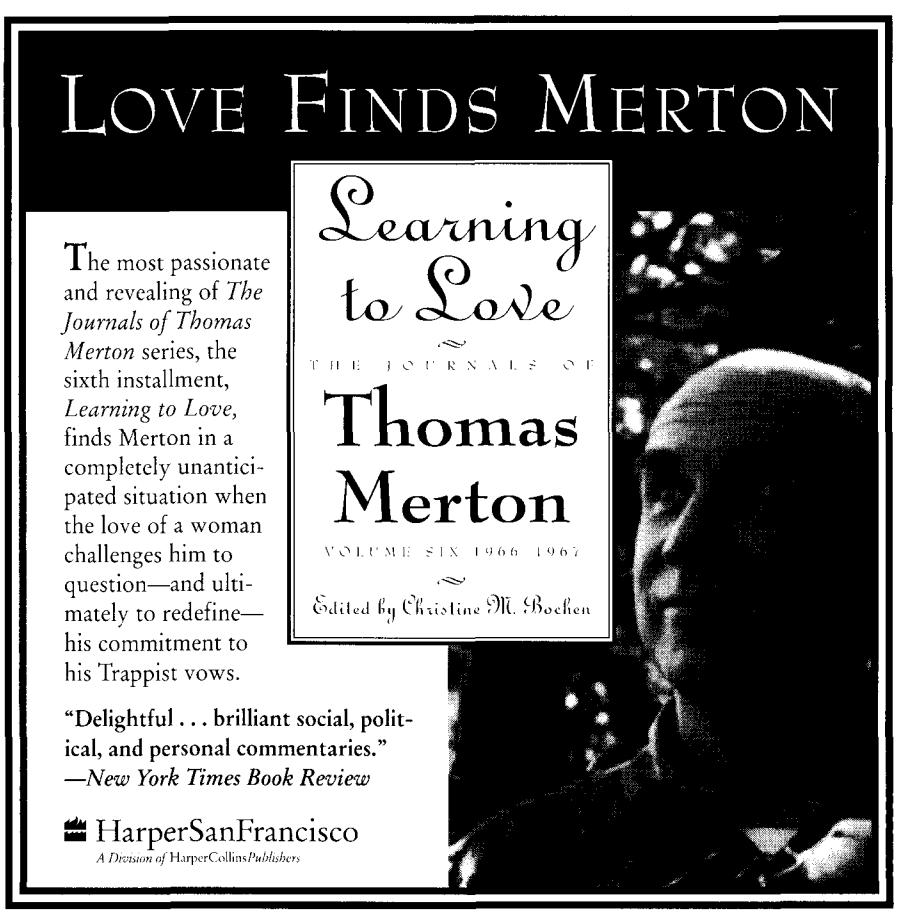
What does "medieval moral theology have to say about homosexuality? The only precise answer is, Absolutely nothing." Such is Mark Jordan's conclusion to his detailed and disturbing tour through the back roads of medieval Christian thought. I say "back roads" because some of the most interesting material comes from once popular—now obscure—medieval manuals for confessors; and, when one turns to major figures such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, homosexuality is treated so obliquely that it is not always clear just what is being discussed. The confessional manuals regarded homosexuality as "unspeakable"; it seems to get a "silent treatment" even in developed moral theology.

Homosexuality was regarded in the manuals as "unspeakable" in a precise sense for the confessor and the penitent. In Robert of Flambrough's *Penitential Book*—one of the most widely used manuals of the thirteenth century—the confessor may ask whether the penitent "had someone" in a manner out of the ordinary. But, if the penitent asks what that means, Robert says that the confessor ought not to respond. "For I never make mention to him of something from which he can take the occasion of sin." In other words, the confessor is not to get into details lest he introduce the penitent to a type of conduct the poor soul had previously not considered. Homosexuality was also "unspeakable" on the side of the penitent: it was regarded as "bestial" and so the sin, like the beasts, cannot speak. "The love that dare not speak its name" has a long metaphysical history.

When we come to the two great theologians, Albert and Aquinas, Jordan argues that homosexuality again fails to speak or be spoken to. Albert the Great is particularly interesting because of his unequaled mastery of the sciences of the day. Sex was a medical-biological subject as well as a subject for moral direction. Albert knew the *Canon of Medicine* by the great Arab philosopher-physician, Avicenna. A condition called *al-ubna* (the desire to have the passive role in anal intercourse) was regarded—at least by some authorities—as a medical condition caused by an excess of semen around the anus. If *al-ubna* were a medical condition, then it would seem to escape moral opprobrium. Jordan faults Albert-the-moralist for ignoring the medical/physiological issue. Jordan sums up: For Albert "the desire to exclude [homosexuality] from speech...is [enacted] with regard to medicine and natural philosophy. Where he will not engage, he keeps silence."

Aquinas calls homosexuality a "carnal, bestial, and unnameable vice," which sounds pretty awful. However, despite the heavy rhetoric, Jordan notes that Thomas regards it as only "a middling species of a subsidiary class of sins." Jordan regards Thomas's arguments as misreadings of Augustine and Aristotle. Aquinas shifts from an Augustinian fear of misdirected *libido*—where the proper end of desire is the love of God—to misdirection of the natural organs and functions since they were created by God for the purpose of propagation. Whatever Aquinas may say about the biological capacities of the sexual organs, he fails to speak to the complexity of sexual libido. Silence again.

A careful reader will have noted that so far I have not once mentioned the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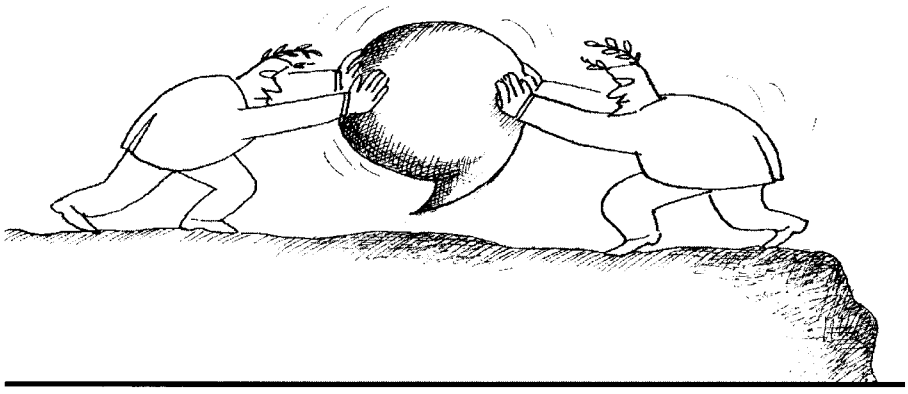

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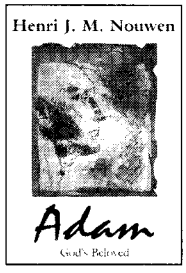

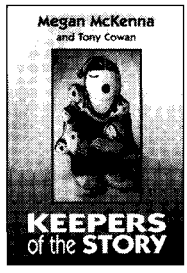

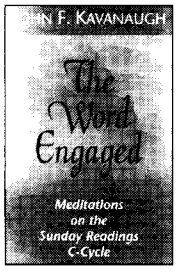

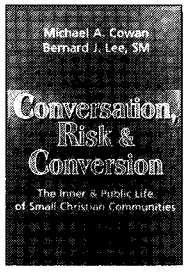

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word "sodomy" which is what Jordan claims is being "invented" by the poets, confessors, and theologians of the period. The omission is deliberate: The "invention" of the word *sodomia* was the work of Peter Damian in the middle of the eleventh century. Just what is *sodomia*—what were the Sodomites up to? Peter is clear that it was homosexual activity and that such acts merit punishment equivalent to blasphemy: utter destruction. Peter fixes *sodomia* in two senses: He specifies it to homosexuality, and by making sodomy an abstract noun, he creates a broad polemical category which by-passes the complexities and nuances of individual behavior—in the way that "Christian" covers in some sense John Paul II, Jerry Falwell, and Saint Francis. Once invented, *sodomia* comes to mean homosexual conduct, and to be an essential characterization of individuals who engage in same-sex acts.

The problem with Peter's invention is that it is by no means clear that homosexuality was the Sodomitic fault. The longer tradition is that the fault of Sodom was *luxuria*. Thus Ezechiel: "This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, overabundance of bread, abundance, and leisure. They did not extend their hand to the poor. They were raised up and committed abominations before me" (16:49-50). Aquinas retains this tradition when he categorizes homosexuality as a subspecies of *luxuria*. In the New Testament, when Jesus talks about the destruction of Sodom he does not link it to some specific sin, it is an example of how the terrible wrath of God may fall on anyone who fails to hear God's word (Matt. 10:15).

I said at the beginning that Jordan's treatment is "detailed and disturbing." The "detail" is in the reading of all sorts of odd documents. The disturbing character is in the details: the bizarre sexual teaching of the day. Incest is regarded as a lesser sin than masturbation because at least "the seed is placed in the proper vessel." Masturbation might be forgiven once, but if it persists there is no hope for the unfortunate sinner. Whatever one may finally think about

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the arguments against homosexual acts, the general tenor of medieval teaching on sexuality suggests that Jordan is correct when he says "we have no persuasive Christian account of human sex generally, much less of its enactments between members of the same sex...."

Mark Jordan is a recognized medieval scholar and a professor at Notre Dame; he is also, as he indicates in the preface, a gay activist. The reviewer is none of the above. I am not in a position to question Jordan's scholarship, which seems to me authoritative. However, my own sense is that medieval treatments on sex are generally so confused and censorious that one should not be surprised that homosexuality is ill-treated.

If one wished to rescue these medieval treatises from deserved oblivion and obloquy, one could return to the original identification of Sodom with *luxuria*. One might then say that modern Americans live in the city of Luxuria. The overabundance and lack of generosity displayed in ancient Sodom seem everywhere apparent. An issue for citizens of Luxuria is the place of sex: heterosexual, homosexual, any old type and variety. Sex seems to have become *the* cultural obsession in Luxuria.

The medieval writers featured in Jordan's book resided in a different city—the city of Ascetica. The citizens of Ascetica would regard our sex-drenched cityscape as badly disordered. This culture may have been too constrictive to regard procreative heterosexual cohabitation in the missionary position as the "natural," only barely licit, form of sexual congress (the standard teaching of the confessional manuals). But luxuriating in every sexual twinge and twitch may only free us from the fixation of procreative nature on into the obsessions of sexual diffusion and sterile fantasy. To note yet another restrictive moralist, whose teachings once influenced American history: We have moved from John Calvin to Calvin Klein. Dubious progress. □

Dennis O'Brien *is president emeritus of the University of Rochester.*

ALL THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

What Are Freedoms For?

John H. Garvey

Harvard University Press, $35, 312 pp.

David McCabe

There's no harder task in political theory than elucidating and defending our deepest assumptions. Sure, we're all for equality. But why, exactly, and what sort of equality is important? Of course we favor democracy. But why should we (recent results are hardly inspiring), and what constitutes genuine democracy? In *What Are Freedoms For?*, Notre Dame law professor John H. Garvey asks similar questions about freedom. We all know freedom is good, and we all want more of it. But explaining precisely why it's good, and determining how the state should balance liberties when they come into conflict, are central problems in political thought. Garvey's aim is to resolve both of these questions.

In the first half of the book Garvey considers two approaches to the value of freedom. The first grounds freedom in our capacity for choice. What governments should protect is our freedom to make whatever choices we want, and they should treat any choice (assuming it does not harm others) as equal to any other. They should be, as the saying goes, neutral toward the good. In the alternative approach that Garvey himself defends, the importance of freedom derives from our capacity to act in ways that further our good. Here freedom is

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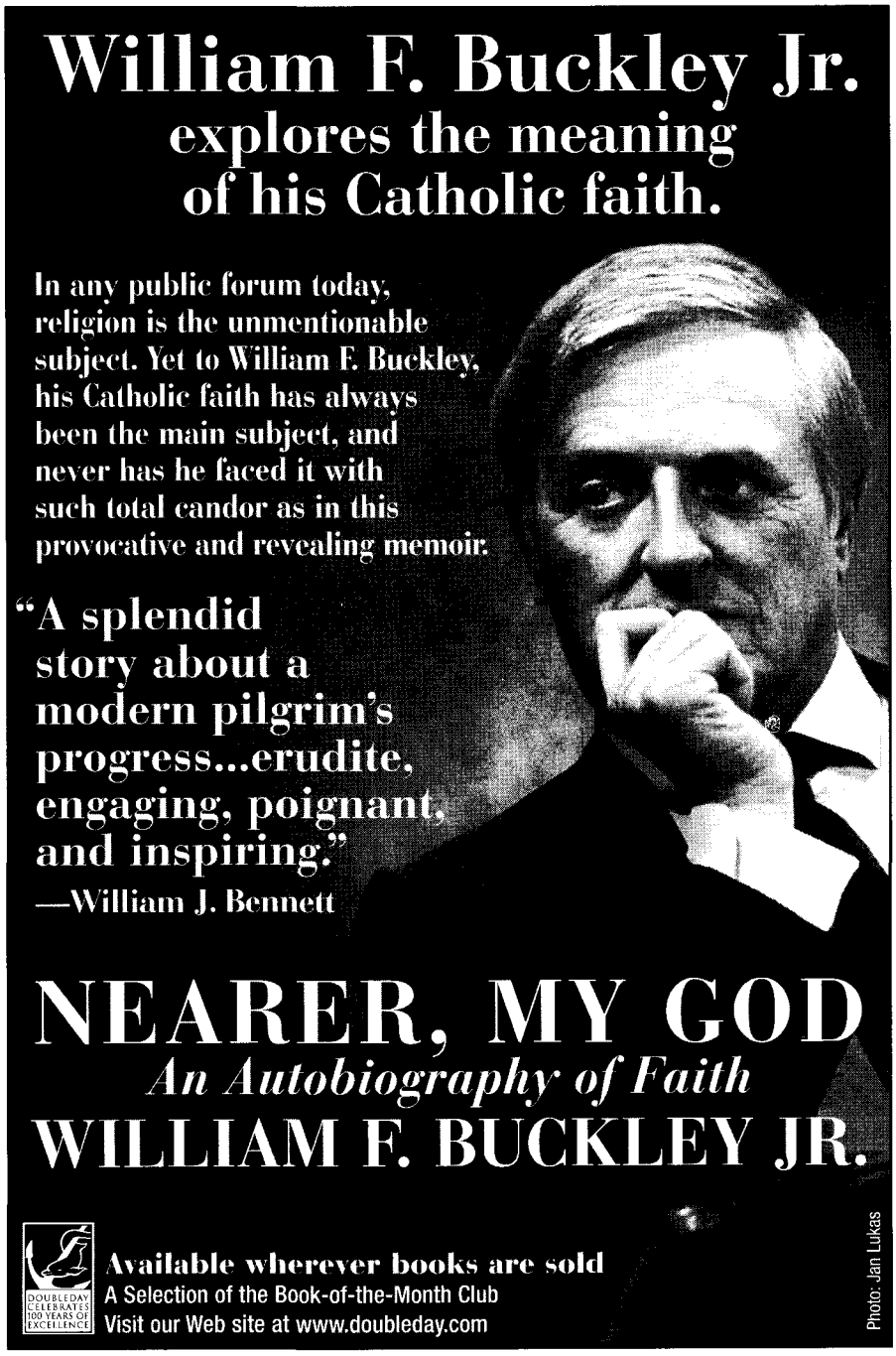
important not simply because it allows us to make choices, but because it allows us to make choices in areas central to true human flourishing. Though at odds with much contemporary philosophy, this take on freedom is essentially compatible with traditional Catholic views.

What is at stake between these two approaches? If we think freedoms protect our capacity to choose, and that the state in balancing freedoms should not consider the distinctive value of what is chosen, then it follows that governments should not treat religious freedom, for example, as any more important than the freedom to blow on the kazoo, and should not treat restrictions on the former as any more worrisome than restrictions on the latter. But if, as Garvey suggests, freedoms protect our capacity to engage in certain especially valuable pursuits, then the state should consider the relative value of actions when balancing liberties. In that case, the state should acknowledge that religious worship is intrinsically more important than playing the kazoo. Garvey argues that only through adopting this second approach to the value of freedom can states reasonably resolve conflicts over liberties, a task he discusses through extensive case analysis in the second half of the book.

Overall, Garvey's argument is unassailable: The view that the state can balance freedoms without any reference to ultimate human goods is not only impracticable, but theoretically indefensible. But the consequences of adopting his model of freedoms are significant, as Garvey makes clear: Since many individuals disagree about what activities constitute the human good, some may find that the liberties of most concern to them (for example, sexual liberty) receive less protection than the liberties of most concern to others (for example, religious liberty). This result will strike some, perhaps many, as unfair. However one sees it, the preference for religious freedom over sexual freedom does point to the inherent conservatism in Garvey's approach. That approach is not without its costs. For if freedoms are valued because they protect our pursuit of the good, those actions that might lead to new or unexplored areas of human flourishing will tend to receive less protection. That does not seem desirable. Garvey might respond that all we can do is look at our shared traditions and try to identify what best serves the individual and common good; the process may not be neat, but there's no alternative. This may well be right (I suspect it is), but it does mean that those empowered with balancing freedoms have a responsibility to gather input from all citizens and to distinguish between actions that don't further human goods and actions that some people just don't like. Both of these concerns loom over any attempt to talk about "our" values. So when Garvey says, in the context of a discussion of Georgia's law against sodomy, that "sex is an activity that we value highly only when it is connected with love," one can't help asking, who is we, and who speaks for our shared values? The book would be strengthened by further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discussion of this concern.

This omission, however, could be easily addressed without significantly recasting Garvey's argument. The problems in his characterization of liberalism are deeper. Liberalism is often defended on grounds that it best protects individual autonomy. Now autonomy is an enormously contested concept: Some understand it as our ability to forgo acting on desires we wish to disown (rising above compulsion or obsessions), while others have in mind the capacity of pure reason to legislate rules of morality binding on all rational beings. But when Garvey glosses autonomy as "the ability each person has to make his own moral rules," he reduces it to a kind of moral subjectivism quite at odds with what its defenders, from Kant to Rawls, have argued for. His claim that "it is illiberal to favor childbirth over abortion" seems a similarly unfair swipe. Since one of liberalism's central premises is that the immorality of an action is not by itself reason to outlaw it, it is quite reasonable for prochoice liberals to regard childbirth as a better option than abortion. Garvey's claim about abortion collapses tolerance (shown to that which is disapproved of) into indifference: The most reasonable defenses of liberalism, however, depend upon drawing a distinction between the two. So while he is right to suggest that certain strands of liberalism have gone too far in their apotheosis of individual choice, there is more to autonomy-based liberalism than Garvey credits, and his unsympathetic interpretation closes off the opportunity for an enlightening confrontation between his own position and that endorsed by autonomy's defenders.

This weakness, however, does not detract from the important accomplishment of this book. The kinds of arguments Garvey makes are essential to restoring both cohesiveness and purpose to our most vital public institutions. If we cut off politics from all discussion of the human good, we shall end up only with the dispiriting spectacle of an enervated nation that thinks itself a corporation, one that in championing efficiency loses all contact with what is of greatest concern in the lives of its citizens. In arguing that we cannot engage in politics without also talking about values, this book may help counter the political malaise in this country. Whatever one thinks of his answers, John Garvey has raised all the right questions. One only hopes that we as a nation can show the same courage. □

David McCabe *teaches philosophy at Colgate University.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) has uncovered billions of dollars' worth of waste in the military's procurement procedure; according to Government Accounting Office figures, the Department of Defense acknowledged $18 billion worth in 1996 alone. Does the U.S. taxpayer want to waste such sums?

(Continued on page 30)

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(Continued from page 29)

Our editorial underscored our concern for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and asked skeptically whether present U.S. policy does enough in that regard. Finally, Mr. Korb argues that without risking U.S. security, we could save $100 billion on defense in the next five years alone. We'd like to go at least part way.

Gray immanence

Reading John T. McGreevy's review of Charles Morris's *American Catholic* (September 12), I could not refrain from smiling. It brought to mind a meeting my dad vividly recounted to my mother. It seems that he and his brother, both physicians, had attended a reception for Philadelphia Archbishop Denis Dougherty; as young people they had been from the same area in Pennsylvania and knew each other, though our family (Costello) was in better circumstances than the Doughertys. On approaching His Eminence they were greeted with a cool glance and "To what do I have the honor of this visit?" My dad, in telling the story, said almost wonderingly, "And this is the man whose father my father fished out of the river?!"

At Mount Saint Joseph Academy in Chestnut Hill, where I attended school, we were occasionally graced (?) with the cardinal's presence. My favorite teacher and mentor was Sister Saint Luke, a talented artist (she had studied under John Singer Sargent). She painted many portraits (lifesize and more so) of His "Immanence," as such likenesses were in great demand (every rectory had to have its own grandiose icon). She despised doing this—it was not art to her—but it brought a substantial amount of money to her order, so some good came of it.

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AUTUMN IS FOR BEGINNING: A HOMILY

Stephen Schloesser

Take care of the vine you yourself planted;
Restore us, O Lord; give us new life.
Psalm 80

I am getting close to the end of a goal I set for myself: reading all the stories by my fellow Minnesotan, the Catholic novelist Jon Hassler. We both know Lake Woebegon territory intimately: it is a world framed by the anticipation and the aftereffects of long, bitterly cold, unbearably dark winters. But Hassler always manages to find profound hope in this world seemingly "north of hope," and so I have become a missionary spreading this gospel of Jon.

The project had me recently finishing up Hassler's novel, *Simon's Night*. Simon Shea is a seventy-year-old professor of English at a small college in upstate Minnesota. Anticipating his mandatory retirement from doing what he loves, he makes plans to move into a boarding house in a town in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by absolutely nothing he loves. Here, with five other inmates, he plans to live out his last days. But the hitch is that he has lost his will to live before his appointed time; in fact his life is just beginning. The novel turns on a contest between two forces: life's incalculability, and Simon's obstinacy. It takes a powerful moment of grace—a startling visit after forty years—to make Simon see, suddenly, not so much what he has done, but rather what he has become. In the event, he repents of his self-wounding willfulness and opens himself to the violence of grace—so that it might fill him with new life.

I have also recently been rereading Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. And I was stunned—having just turned thirty-nine myself—by the opening lines of Charles Ryder as he lies in his bunk and compares his military life to a marriage. "Here at the age of thirty-nine," he says, "I began to be old...Here my last love died....I was aghast to realize that something within me, long sickening, had quietly died, and felt as a husband might feel, who...suddenly knew that he had no longer any desire, of tenderness, or esteem, for a once-beloved wife; no hope of setting things right, no self-reproach for the disaster...." Like Simon Shea, Charles Ryder sees, suddenly, not so much what he has done, but rather what he has become. And he is filled with despair. But this is not the end of the story! Just as Simon Shea must come to terms with his past, so must Charles Ryder revisit Brideshead. He too must open himself to the violence of grace—so that it might fill him with new life.

Take care of the vine you yourself planted;
Restore us, O Lord; give us new life.

It is no coincidence that the Jewish Scriptures over and again juxtapose images of the vineyard and of marriage. Both begin with great hopes and high expectations; both require tremendous work and cultivation; both are notoriously fragile. Sometimes, both a vineyard and a marriage produce "sour grapes," a seemingly total failure. One morning we wake up and we despair, not so much of what we have done, but of what our life has become. We despair of the totality of things.

Both the vineyard and the marriage, then, evoke times in our lives when we suddenly recognize that the problem is not so much what we have done, but rather what we have become. These moments—whether they come at retirement or in midlife—have this particular quality: they are moments of vision, of revelation, and of repentance. And that is why the scriptural image for this insight is the autumn harvest: because this kind of overall vision is only possible at harvest time, when the grapes have finally picked, when we finally know whether the vineyard is going to yield life-giving wine, or merely sour grapes.

It is no coincidence, either, that the church uses these images of vineyards in this autumn season, this time of harvest, when the days grow short and the nights grow chilly, and thoughts turn toward endings, winter, and our own numbered days. For centuries, our liturgy has used the month of October to reflect on harvesting and the month of November to reflect on death. The point, though, is not to fixate on death, but to gather up our lives as a whole in order to prepare ourselves for possible new beginnings. Simon Shea and Charles Ryder alike are given the violent grace of seeing their lives as a whole so that they might further see them restored.

In short, the images of vineyards, of marriage, and of harvest embrace our deepest desire: to refind and refound the capacity to love. After all the betrayals, disappointment, heartbreaks, tragedies, illnesses, separations, and deaths, autumn leads us, paradoxically, to the threshold of life. Autumn leads to the solstice, to the darkest day of winter. But on that day, when life seems as cold and dark and lifeless as it can possibly get, when life seems "north of hope," we Christians celebrate the astonishing grace of a new life, of a newborn child, of a light the darkness cannot extinguish. □

Stephen Schloesser, S.J., *is a doctoral candidate in modern European history at Stanford University.*

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